

THE LABOR OF LOVE AND BREAD: PROFESSIONALIZED AND  
VOLUNTEER ACTIVISM IN THE SÃO PAULO WOMEN'S HEALTH MOVEMENT

By

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Dedicated to the vibrant São Paulo women activists without whom this work would not have seen the light of day.

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In the past 10 years, many professionalized organizations, also referred to as nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), have been formed in the Brazilian women's movement. This study examines the origins of this trend, linked to the boom of NGOs worldwide, to the return of formal democracy in Brazil in 1985, and to the still limited absorption by the international development establishment of part of the women's movement agenda, as well as to changes internal to the movement. Based on ethnographic research, this study compares the collective identity, practices and internal dynamics of two professionalized and two volunteer groups dealing with women's health in São Paulo. This study demonstrates that the women's movement is best understood as a social movement field with heterogeneous participants. Feminist NGOs are one of them. Yet, their organizational characteristics distinguish NGOs from classic social movement organizations. In search of the efficiency and management capability required by the logic



of projects financed by donor agencies, NGOs have a more formalized and differentiated internal structure, less permeable for neighborhood women. The presence of extrinsic rewards alters the meaning of members' participation in feminist NGOs which becomes simultaneously a commitment for gendered social change and a means for earning a living. NGOs have an hybrid identity. Their emphasis on planning, linked to accountability to donors for funded projects, tends to steer NGOs away from, and to limit their potential for, consciousness-raising and mobilization. Yet, it stimulates publications, research activities and advocacy in policy-making arenas, a shift already promoted by the transition towards formal democracy. As a result, professionalized feminists have tended to reduce their involvement with São Paulo neighborhood women's groups. With professionalization, the movement also faces new challenges in terms of increased power differentials.

Professionalized activist organizations and their associated institutional strategies do contribute to social change. Yet, a two-pronged strategy with a vibrant movement involved in cultural/micro-level change is essential for true democratization and gendered equity. Strategies increasing NGOs downward accountability to their constituency would greatly enhance the balancing act between their advocacy and their micro-level culture change projects.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### Social Movements and the Deepening of Democracy

The other day I was asking somebody who belongs to a women's group: Your organization, is it an NGO or is it the movement? She replied: It is the movement! I said: But what do you mean? you're structured like an NGO. She said: No, for us it is the same thing, there is no difference. We are an organization at the service of the movement.

This can't be! An NGO is an NGO! A social movement is a social movement! NGOs, in principle, are only accountable to financing agencies. The movement is accountable to those it represents! What kind of similarity is there here? I think that if we do not make this point very clear, we will not contribute to redemocratization. It is fundamentally linked to a truly democratic order in this country! [Volunteer feminist activist from Rio de Janeiro]<sup>1</sup>

This is how it all started. This Brazilian feminist activist, back in the summer of 1992, had planted the seed that would become this dissertation. Her questioning was about the nature of social movements and of NGOs, about the relationship between the two and about their contribution to the democratization of Brazilian society and politics, as well as about the role played by financing agencies in this story. I decided to find out more about these issues.

In 1985, a formal democratic system was reinstituted in Brazil after two decades of military rule. As in other Latin American countries, the women's movement along with other social movements and grassroots organizations have all been significant participants in this redemocratization process. However, Brazilian society has been and still remains characterized

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<sup>1</sup> All quotes translated from Portuguese by author.

by social authoritarianism: hierarchy and inequality pervade the cultural practices through which people relate to each other in everyday life (Weinstein 1994; Da Matta 1987). This pattern is reflected in severe economic, racial and gender inequalities (Dagnino 1994a; Lovell 1993). True forms of cultural, economic and social democratization remain to be achieved for a "deepening of democracy" (Alvarez 1993). Beyond battling social authoritarianism, a deepening of democracy would entail creating "channels and strategies that increase nonelite access to policymaking and implementation" (Alvarez 1993: 212).

This study focuses on the role the Brazilian women's movement can play in these processes, using the São Paulo women's health movement as a case study. In the past 10-15 years, the women's movement has undergone partial professionalization --strictly speaking, the process by which activists come to be remunerated for their movement activities-- through the creation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Generally, NGOs are defined as legally sanctioned civil organizations providing services and support to local grassroots groups in disadvantaged communities and/or engaging in research and advocacy activities, a concept derived from Carroll's Grassroots Support Organizations (1992:11). Maintaining the balance between these two poles of activity (advocacy and support) has been a challenge for many NGOs, including for women's NGOs, due to the political opening in Brazil, as well as to their own history and nature as members of an identity-based movement. NGOs have a permanent, paid staff and are accountable to some degree to their donors, most often international agencies or private foundations, for the research, consulting, service-providing projects or support to local women's groups for which they are granted funding. Their structure is fairly formalized, usually with a coordination heading the organization, and a division of labor, especially between administrative tasks and the "technical" work done by specialized staff. However,

NGOs differ according to organizational histories and the political and personal characteristics of their members.

Some volunteer feminist groups perform similar activities as do NGOs, although in a more spontaneous manner, responding to demands as they arise rather than following projects. They have a voluntary, fluctuating membership of activists. They are more likely to be accountable to their constituency, or to grassroots groups since they do not depend on donor money for their organizational survival and have smaller budgets. They also dedicate some activities to the needs of the members of the group itself.

Both feminist NGOs and volunteer feminist groups engage in coalition work of the women's movement and in advocacy for greater gender equity. They consider themselves feminist. In that sense feminist NGOs differ from other NGOs which also work with women but do not generally participate in the women's movement and do not identify themselves as feminist. I will use the terms NGO, professionalized organization and professionalized group interchangeably in this dissertation. I sometimes refer to professionalized feminist groups and volunteer feminist groups collectively as support groups, for want of a better label, when I wish to distinguish them from the neighborhood women's groups with which they interact. As I have just mentioned, this term is not very satisfactory since many of these groups have reduced the support they were offering to neighborhood women's groups. I also sometimes refer to volunteer groups as volunteer support groups, again to distinguish them from neighborhood women's groups, all of which are also volunteer. To complicate matters further some of these neighborhood women's groups consider themselves feminist, a phenomenon known as popular feminism, which I will discuss in chapter 6.

The purpose of this dissertation is to understand the origins of the trend towards professionalization of the women's movement, via the creation of NGOs, considering the internal and external factors that have contributed to this process. It is also to examine the impact of professionalization on the internal dynamics of the groups, as well as on their collective identity and strategies, on their relationship to the neighborhood women's organizations they offer support to and sometimes get to represent. I will also consider the groups' position vis-à-vis the national and international power structure and their relations to international donor agencies. One of my concerns, throughout this work, has been to highlight the trade-offs of professionalization with regard to the potential of the movement to bring about a deepening of democracy within the women's movement and in the larger society.

I hoped, when I started this work that it could be of use to movement activists. John Burdick made a cogent argument for the role ethnography can play in illuminating diversity within a movement and hence in helping the movement identify its challenges and potential for growth. He aptly sees applied anthropology as a strong base from which to launch this kind of work, provided we shift the focus of much of the subdiscipline from "agency or state-initiated projects of social change" (1995: 363) to these grassroots efforts. Yet, this type of ethnography is not without challenges: throughout the research and write-up process I have wondered what gave me the right --not only as an outsider but a neophyte who has not even participated in any of their struggles-- to question some of their practices when these women have dedicated their lives to matters of feminism. Leilah Landim, who worked for an NGO and wrote her dissertation based on this experience, puts it in these terms: "to write a sociology of agents who consider themselves as "at the service of others" is still an issue fraught with ambiguity and

questioning" (*'fazer uma sociologia de agentes que se querem 'a serviço' ainda e questão carregada de ambiguidades e questionamentos'*) (1993a:19).

Beyond this immediate, applied dimension of my work, it is important for anthropologists, who have until recently neglected the study of social movements, to take a closer look at these nonkin forms of social organization. Burdick reminds us that "a generation ago, Richard Clemmer [...] declared that a sustained commitment by anthropologists to the study of organized popular attempts to bring about social change would "provide anthropology with a much more balanced and useful body of theory" (1995:361).

Finally, although nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) have become ubiquitous in the literature, especially on development and transnational activism, and have prompted many declarations of faith, few first-hand ethnographic studies are available of their power dynamics and relationships to the grassroots and to the State (Fisher 1997). Such studies could also illuminate "changes in the nature of local and global forms of collective action" (Fisher 1997:441). The strength of the international women's movement, of which Brazilian feminists are noted participants, is undeniable. Yet, we need to assess how it affects local organizing and processes of democratization.

### Methods and Fieldwork Experience

I decided to focus on the issue of NGOization (*a Ongização*) of the feminist movement as a result of a preliminary research trip in July and August of 1992, when I conducted semi-structured interviews with 21 women activists, primarily in Rio de Janeiro. Questions relative to the professionalization of the movement examined in this dissertation were starting to raise eyebrows among activists, as the quote at the beginning of this introduction denotes. A review

of the literature at the time revealed practically no discussion of these issues. My dissertation topic was decided.

I went back to Brazil from September 1994 until November 1995, this time mainly to São Paulo. I did travel to Rio de Janeiro for national events such as the national conference in preparation for the IV UN conference on Women. This fieldwork consisted of two phases<sup>2</sup>. During the first phase, which lasted from September to December 1994, I surveyed the existing women's health groups in São Paulo in order to select a sample for the larger project. My original research design called for identifying two volunteer groups and two professionalized groups that otherwise would be as similar as possible in terms of size, members' socioeconomic profile and racial/ethnic identity, and activities conducted. Once on the ground, however, I realized that, although there was some overlap, the structure, members' composition, collective identity and the activities engaged in by the two types of groups were in fact quite different and that this was an important issue to look into. I therefore chose 4 groups which represented different trajectories, although they all consider themselves as feminist and work on health issues.

The second phase lasted from January to November 1995. During this stage of the research I learned more about the different types of groups through participant observation and semi-structured interviews. More specifically, I conducted interviews with each of the members

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<sup>2</sup> The first phase was financed by the North-South Center through their Short-term Field Research Grant Program on Poverty and Urban Violence. The second and longest phase was financed by The John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation through their Program on Peace and International Cooperation, by the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Florida through their Dissertation Fellowship, and by the National Science Foundation through their Dissertation Improvement Program for Anthropology. The Carlos Chagas Foundation kindly granted me institutional and logistical support during my stay in São Paulo.

of the four support organizations to learn about the socio-economic profile of the members, how they had changed in participating in this organization, what they understood as the goals of the organization, and what they thought about the professionalization of the women's movement. I participated in workshops and other activities organized by the support groups and spent one week in the headquarters of each organization doing participant observation of their daily activities and interactions.

Starting at the end of November 1994 I followed the process of preparation and mobilization for the UN international conference on women to be held in Beijing in September 1995. I conducted participant observation in the bi-weekly preparation meetings, in the three seminars organized in São Paulo, and in the state and the national conferences held in June 1995. I conducted participant observation on the process of organization for the street demonstration on the 8th March (International Women's Day) and participated in various other events celebrating this event.

The objective in participating in these movement-wide activities was to observe points of consensus and conflict between professionalized and volunteer members. With the same objective I also participated, in May, in the annual meeting of the *Rede Nacional Feminista de Saúde e Direitos Reprodutivos* (National Feminist Network for Health and Reproductive Rights), in Rio de Janeiro. The Network brings together 70 organizations from all over Brazil who work with women's health. The four support groups I have been working with are members of this network. After this meeting I also participated in the monthly meeting of the São Paulo section of the Network. Again, I wanted to understand better what part was played by different actors and the interaction between them.



From August to October 1995, I interviewed the members of three grassroots groups who receive support from the four groups I had been working with in order to understand better their relationship to support groups, to assess their level of gender, race and class consciousness, as well as their level of dependency on the support group. I conducted participant observation in the activities that these groups organized, including workshops, meetings, and a street campaign for gynecological cancer prevention.

Before leaving, I scheduled meetings with each of the support and grassroots groups I worked with in order to discuss with them my preliminary findings. This feedback proved very informative and useful. During this last month I also interviewed representatives from six financing agencies who finance women's groups. I participated in a seminar held in Recife, in the Northeast of Brazil, about international cooperation and gender policies, which brought together representatives of women's groups and financing agencies.

Looking back, I found that four groups were too many with which to conduct as thorough a participant observation as I would have liked. This was compounded by the fact that I had to spend several hours a day on the public transportation system: São Paulo is the largest city in the world in terms of surface area (1700 km<sup>2</sup>) (Medina 1991:13) and its public transportation system relies mainly on buses, not on subways, which greatly lengthens time of travel (Santos 1994:13). However, managing good relations with all groups simultaneously, while remaining true to myself and being comfortable expressing my reservations on some issues proved to be, by far, the most challenging part of my experience with São Paulo women's groups.

### The Politics of Representation and the Ethnography of Activism

Issues related to authority in ethnographic work and to the politics of representation have been debated for more than a decade in anthropology, since Marcus and Fisher's seminal work (1986). My work proved particularly challenging in this regard as I was working with highly politicized informants, aware of the power issues present between me, as researcher, and them. I was repeatedly warned that I should not be one more researcher who would come, do my thing and then leave without ever again giving sign of life. One group allowed me to conduct participant observation only on the condition that they see my work before it is published. These are logical and natural requests. Yet, in practical terms, it was not an easy task since I have been writing my dissertation in the United States and in English.

The meetings I had with each of the groups before leaving Brazil to present my preliminary findings, were thus crucial in fine-tuning our agreements. This was a difficult exercise, however, since I felt uncomfortable launching into this exposition without having gone through a thorough analysis of the data, as well as uncertain as to the reaction of the women. In all cases, lively discussions did follow. NGOs routinely perform such feedback sessions (which they call *devolução*) at the end of their research projects, following a more participatory approach to research. As my consultant and friend Deise suggested, time and resources should have been allocated for feedback activities in my research proposal, as well as for activities which the groups participating in the research would like to see me do. I wish my research had been more participatory and realize that questions I raise in terms of some NGO practices are valid criticisms of my own research. Although I have tried to give voice to various positions within the movement, the ultimate choice of how they would be represented, of what

is included or not, rested with me. In fact, the work of NGO activists and engaged academics share a number of characteristics which I will discuss along the way.

Looking back, I realize how important these feedback meetings were. Academia and social movements work on such different time schedules! It took me more than two years to write-up this dissertation. Always this minutiae of analysis, and making sure to find the right words, to be fair to all. In the meantime, the groups have moved on. Their reality is already changed. I apologize for the delay. It might just reinforce the love-hate relationship that NGOs often have towards academics, who they sometimes see as "hermetic", "stuck-up intellectuals" in their "ivory tower" ("*intelectuais pedantes*" "*herméticos*" "*da torre de marfim*" (Landim 1993a:44)).

Being as explicit as possible with the groups proved quite a challenge because I highly value the work of organized groups and because, like my consultants, I was ill-at-ease with situations of conflict and would have liked to see myself in complete harmony with them. This, of course, was totally naive and unrealistic considering the disagreements existing between the groups themselves. David Kertzer (1980) confided his difficulties in maintaining rapport with ideologically or politically opposed groups, in his case Communists and Catholics in an Italian city. My problems were minor compared to his. After all, the activists I worked with all considered themselves to be part of the feminist movement. Some women took it to heart to make me understand their point of view, to justify their course of action. Others, mostly volunteer neighborhood women, encouraged me to voice my questioning because it mirrored theirs. They felt it would do good to the movement to air out some issues. I guess, with time, I came to see the situation this way too. I wanted to provide constructive criticism because I cared, to be a "committed critic" to use John Burdick's phrase (1995:362). However, at times

it was hard to convince myself that my ethnography could indeed "serv[e] as a means of ongoing movement self-evaluation" and "help refine debates and self-critiques within social movements" (1995:363). These were my stated goals, but I was afraid at times to be just adding fuel to the flames of an already raging debate.

Burdick reflects upon the politics of his own field experience in these terms:

the effort to represent is never politically neutral, especially inside the movement itself. In any kind of research setting, discussing ethnographic findings with subjects requires the ethnographer to consider his or her own sympathies with one or another faction at work in the studied situation. These issues become especially acute in highly politicized settings. (1995:373)

I personally was quite aware of my sympathy for a grassroots-based radical democratic strategy for social change, a "*basista*" position, as it would be called in Brazil. Despite my constant vigilance to the contrary, this is likely to have influenced my reading of the situation. I am convinced that change from the bottom-up is essential in securing the implementation of laws that are the fruit of the labor of institutionalized feminists. I hope I did justice to all.

### Setting The Stage

#### São Paulo in Facts

The city of São Paulo, capital of the State of São Paulo, is the second largest city in the world (Santos 1994:13). Like most third world cities it grew rapidly, without much planning: at the beginning of this century São Paulo counted 300 000 inhabitants (Medina 1991:13); it now has 17 million (Santos 1994:13). Its population is still increasing although at reduced rates: its annual growth rate went down from 5.2% in 1940-1950 (Medina 1991:14) to 4.46%

in 1970-1980 and 1.88% in 1980-1991 (IBGE 1996:33). In fact, surrounding cities are now growing faster than São Paulo itself (Rolnik et al 1990).

São Paulo city remains the industrial, financial and intellectual heart of Brazil (Santos 1994), although some regions of Brazil, in particular the southern states, have shown more dynamism in recent years. For example, São Paulo's share of the national industrial output is declining. The trend is towards greater homogenization of the country. Despite this new trend, São Paulo remains the industrial center of the country but it is also increasingly a financial and commercial center (Rolnik et al. 1990). In 1992, São Paulo state still produced 43.36% of the industrial output of Brazil (percentage of Brazil's secondary sector GDP) and 35% of Brazilian exports (SEADE 1994:70, 102). In terms of the labor market, the share of industrial occupations in São Paulo (which compared to service-related occupations offer relatively better paid jobs) went down from 35.4% of the economically active population in 1976 (Brant et al 1988: 45) to 29.2% in 1981 and 27.9% in 1990 (SEADE 1994:17). In the meantime the share of service-related occupations went up from 36.3% in 1981 to 41.0% in 1990 (SEADE 1994:17).

If São Paulo has a large working class population, it is also the third world city which offers the most numerous opportunities of jobs of an intellectual nature and which has the largest middle class (Santos 1994:14). Administrators and professionals represent 1/4 of the total work force (Andrews 1991:157). Unfortunately, this strengthening of the middle class has not prevented poverty from increasing.

Pauperization of the population has indeed occurred during the 80s to the point where that decade has been called the "decade more than lost" (*a década mais do que perdida*) (Rolnik et al. 1990:52). Families under the threshold of poverty (i.e. earning up to one

minimum salary) represented 34.7% of all families in the larger São Paulo agglomeration in 1981. This percentage went up to 42.1 in 1987 (Source PNAD --National Research on Home Sample-- in Lopes, Juarez Brandão and Gottschalk, Andrea 1990 cited in Rolnik et al. 1990:52). 45% of the greater São Paulo households were considered at poverty or below poverty level in 1995 (with a yearly household buying power of US\$ 4,531), while the richest 3.0% of its population enjoyed a US\$ 159,199 yearly buying power per household (Latin American Market Planning Report 1997:66).

With a sad and tenacious predictability, Brazilian urban households headed by Afro-Brazilians represented, in 1989, 68% of extremely poor households and 57% of poor households, when they make up only 41% of all urban households (Lopes 1994:8). I did not find recent data on São Paulo in particular. Racial discrimination which is present in the everyday life of all Paulistanos of African descent is also apparent in the political and social life of the city: It counted only one black municipal legislator (*vereador*) and one black judge as of 1995 (Turra and Venturi 1995: 39, 51).

Similarly, young female heads of households had, in 1989, almost a 60% probability of being poor compared to 33.54% for the general Brazilian population (*ibid*:9). Female heads of household for urban areas of the state of São Paulo went up from 13.84% in 1980 to 17.50% in 1991 (IBGE 1996:33).

Pauperization has had an effect on the geographic distribution of social classes in the city. São Paulo had developed on a model of concentric circles with the upper and middle-income classes living in the center areas whereas the lower-income population lived in the outer circles. This model of segregation was blurred but not overturned in the 80s: Low-income families no longer able to rent a house in the periphery have had to move into the expanding

*cortiços*<sup>3</sup> in the center of the city or to *favelas*, the Brazilian shantytowns. In the meantime middle-class families living in central neighborhoods were pushed out by declining living standards towards less expensive peripheral neighborhoods (Rolnik et al. 1990:13). The growth of *cortiços* has been spectacular indeed. They housed 820,000 persons at the beginning of the 80s (or 8% of the city's population) while they represented 28% of that population at the end of the decade, that is, a full 3 million people (Medina 1991:17). *Favelas* sheltered 6% of the Paulistana population in 1980 and 8% at the end of the decade (Rolnik et al. 1990:59). All those living in *cortiços*, *favelas* or occupying their residential plot illegally add up to 7.7 million people, that is 65% of São Paulo's inhabitants (Medina 1991:19). Even if class segregation has been somewhat attenuated there is still a strong value attached by the middle-class to living in the central areas. When they heard where I was going to work, middle-class Brazilians, including some feminist activists, often exclaimed "*Está longe para caramba!*" meaning "this is so far away!" This expression revealed not only a judgment on the physical distance but also on the social and cultural distance middle-class urbanites feel there is between them and the periphery.

The low-income population in São Paulo is heavily dependent on government services in order to obtain basic education, health, transportation and urban infrastructure. However, the State has been responding inadequately to these needs, so inadequately that it drove Caccia Bava to refer to "the administration's contempt for its citizen" (1990:62). In the area of health, this public neglect is particularly blatant and is unfortunately growing, as neoliberal policies are being implemented both by the local, state and federal governments.

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<sup>3</sup> A *cortiço* is an old inner-city building which has been subdivided into individual rooms for rent. Entire families live in these rooms in very crowded and unsanitary conditions.

I chose to focus this research on women's groups who work with health and reproductive rights issues because this is an area where a large array of groups are active and have been active for a long time. The women's health movement is particularly well-structured. It has created a national network which pulls together more than 70 groups nationwide. A broad overview of the health situation in Brazil seems in order:

### Health Situation in Brazil

An epidemiological transition occurred between the 1960s and the 1980s in Brazil. Between 1960 and 1980 death rates due to infectious and parasitic diseases went down by 70% and infant mortality went down by 40% (Briscoe 1990:11). The new threats to Brazilians' health are occupational hazards, air pollution, traffic accidents, crime, alcohol and tobacco consumption, and cardiovascular diseases, for which incidence rates in the cities of the southeast of the country are the highest in the world! (Briscoe 1990:12). A privileged section of the Brazilian population enjoys a quality of life and of health care similar to that of industrialized nations and suffers from the same diseases, whereas the less well-off majority is still struggling with unsanitary living conditions, incredibly low incomes and poor nutrition, little access to health care, and suffers from gastrointestinal and pulmonary infections (Cohn 1993). This is disputed by Briscoe (1990) who argues that the poor are also the ones who suffer most from cardiovascular and other non-communicable diseases.

The health situation of the lower classes has deteriorated due to land deprivation in rural areas which led to massive migration, an extremely rapid urbanization and industrialization, predatory labor practices, and a skewed distribution of medical doctors and medical facilities favoring the richer areas of big cities (Cohn 1993). The government



agricultural policies encouraging cash crops for export at the expense of basic food staples generated very high food prices (Macedo 1988; Scheper-Hughes 1992). For example, more than double as much work time was needed in 1974 (end of the Brazilian economic 'miracle') as in 1959 to earn wages sufficient to purchase the same food basket (Kowarick 1985:77). The acute economic crisis of the 80s has worsened the situation. Prices for basic food items increased by 400% in 1983, while general inflation raged at 221% (Barroso and Amado 1987:62). As a result, workers had to spend 262.3 hours a month, i.e. more than the monthly maximum, in October 1983, compared to 120 hours in 1981, to earn enough money to buy the same basket of food (Barroso & Amado 1987:62). Under such circumstances, one can expect malnutrition to take its toll, and indeed, as Carmen Barroso and Tina Amado put it, with "reduced incomes to pay for more expensive food: the solution for poorer families was to eat less" (1987:62).

The ensuing structural policies (Wirth et al. 1987), and the more recent recession, aggravated since 1989 by the economic adjustment policies of the first elected president, Fernando Collor de Mello, and his successors, have meant further dwindling of public funding, privatization of social programs and a sharp increase in poverty levels, although paradoxically some social indicators seem to have slightly improved (Faria 1994; IBASE 1991; Lopes 1994).

### The Brazilian Public Health Care System

The Brazilian Constitution of 1988 (Article 196) states that health is a right for everyone and that it is the State's duty to maintain and improve the population's health. It also stipulates that the public health system should be integrated, decentralized, and controlled by organized civil society --through the creation of the SUS, *Sistema Unico de Saúde* (Article

198) (CNDM 1989). Yet, the Brazilian system is still highly dichotomized and inequalitarian: 25% of the Brazilian population have access to health insurance plans either through their formal sector job or through individual policies and they, in fact, absorbed 88 percent of the total Health Ministry annual budget in 1994. The other 75 percent of the population rely solely on the free public health system, and hence on the meager remainder of the Health Ministry budget (Berquó 1995:7). This segment of the population is increasing as people are pushed out of the formal sector by the economic recession (Cohn 1994). Moreover, the share of prevention and basic health services in total health spending decreased from 64 percent in 1965 to 15 percent in 1980 (Briscoe 1990:12) while there was an explosive growth in technology-oriented curative services to satisfy the middle and upper class (Cohn 1994:98).

Altogether the lack of public investment has led to a deterioration of the health care system in general over the last two decades (Cohn 1994:109). Structural adjustment measures implemented to curb inflation and reduce Brazil's debt have also affected the health system as the federal government cut its health spending from 11.3 to 7.5 billion dollars between 1989 and 1993. This amounts to per capita spending of 48 dollars in 1993 down from 80 dollars in 1989 (Berquó 1995:7). São Paulo State and municipal governments have also been reducing their spending on health. The consequences of this bleak situation for women's health and how this was conducive to the emergence of a women's health movement will be detailed in this work.

### Outline of Chapters

This dissertation is composed of nine chapters. Chapter 2 reviews the theoretical issues pertaining to the nature of social movements, the consequences of the professionalization of social movements and the role of organizations within social movements. It also considers the contributions anthropologists and practice theory can make to the study of social movements. Chapter 3 narrows this theoretical discussion to the emergence of nongovernmental organizations in recent years globally, in Brazil and finally within the Brazilian women's movement. It considers the role played in this emergence by the transition and consolidation of formal democracy in Brazil. It examines the areas of contestation of the definition of NGOs, their hybrid nature in identity-based movements, as well as the concerned questioning these organizations have raised in the literature and among activists.

Chapter 4 shifts the focus to the internal organizational structure, dynamics and practices of NGOs and volunteer feminist groups. It examines the reasons why NGOs' practices are more formalized and instrumental and what the consequences are in terms of internal democracy. Chapter 5 considers the consequences of these organizational changes on the individual identity and commitment of professionalized activists, as well as on the collective identity of the groups, showing how they deter professionalized activists from engaging in direct action and stimulate institutional work and advocacy. Chapter 6 confirms the greater heterogeneity the feminist movement has achieved, due to the inclusion, as self-proclaimed feminists, of a number of neighborhood women. It discusses the challenges this poses for the movement in terms of ensuring participation and democratic processes. Paradoxically, it examines the reasons for the current reduction of the involvement of feminists with

neighborhood women's groups in São Paulo and the role played by professionalization and other factors in this recent trend.

Chapter 7 looks at the other side of the coin, namely the increased participation of São Paulo feminists in State and international policy-making arenas. This institutionalization has ensured numerous benefits for women, which would not have been secured otherwise. However, it is not without trade-offs. This chapter will consider the challenges in terms of representativity, solidarity and crystallization of hierarchies within the movement these new strategies also raise. Chapter 8 examines the role played by financing agencies in the institutionalization of the movement, in some cases through their political priorities and, unintentionally, through their funding practices. The final chapter returns to issues of the relationship of NGOs and social movements, of institutionalization and professionalization, and sums up the lessons learned regarding social change and deepening of democracy.

## CHAPTER 2 SOCIAL MOVEMENT RESEARCH AND ANTHROPOLOGY

### Introduction

The broader social actor which is the focus of this dissertation is the Brazilian women's movement. It is important to situate this study within the body of social movement theory to understand the contribution of social movements in general, and the women's movement in particular, to the democratization process, as well as the position and role of Nongovernmental Organizations in relation to the movement. This is what I hope to do in this chapter.

A detailed and lengthy overview and critique of the two main schools of social movement theory, namely New Social Movement (NSM) and Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), has been undertaken by Joe Foweraker (1995) who also discusses the relevance of these different theories for Latin America. I will limit myself with discussing how the two can and should be articulated. I believe, as Foweraker does and before him Escobar & Alvarez (1992), that a cross-pollination of these two theoretical approaches can further our understanding of social movements and collective action because they broadly focus on the how and why of social movements: in other words, why social movements emerge and exist (NSM) and how they are organized and function (RMT). The concept of social movement fields and its emphasis on movement heterogeneity is particularly useful to this study.

I then delve into the heart of the matter: the professionalization and institutionalization of social movements and the role played by organizations in the lives of social movements.

Various theories have dealt with these processes but there is no consensus on what their origins and their consequences for social change are. The second part of this chapter points at some areas where anthropologists, who have tended to focus on individual everyday resistance, can contribute to social movement research, notably in terms of their heterogeneity, and of the relationship between movement practices and their collective identity and potential growth.

### Resource Mobilization Theory and New Social Movement Theory

The classical theories about social movements which dominated until the early 70s were social-psychological in nature (mass-society approach and collective behavior approach). They considered social movements as irrational. Concentrating at the individual level, they explored character traits and states of mind that favored participation in rebellions. They also focused on movement emergence and explained individual participation by looking at discontent as responses to rapid social change (For overviews see Cohen 1985; Eckstein 1989; McAdam et al. 1988; and Zald 1992). In response to these earlier theories, two major approaches towards social movements developed, one mainly in the United States, the other in Western Europe. The latter has also been used and modified in Latin America.

The North American paradigm distinguishes itself from earlier theories because it posits that social movements are based on rational choice exercised by participating individuals. This approach focuses on the organizational factors within social movements and the conditions under which beliefs are transformed into concrete action. It is based on the individualistic, utilitarian logic of the rational actor, although it does not follow rational choice theory blindly. Still, resource mobilization theorists analyze social movements on the basis of the logic of strategic interaction and cost-benefit calculations (Cohen 1985). According to this school of

thought social movements are based on conflicts, collective action can be institutional or noninstitutional but social movements are seen as noninstitutional (McAdam et al. 1988). Since grievances are always produced in society, they cannot account for the emergence of groups. Instead, opportunities, availability of resources and organizations explain the formation of movements. According to RMT the success of movements is to be measured by their political recognition or by the material benefits they provide, although Tarrow (1994), in his most recent contribution, also considers that social movements bring less tangible benefits such as permanent "expansions in participation, in popular culture and in ideology"(1994:8).

While the identity-oriented or new social movements paradigm also recognizes that social movements are not irrational phenomena, it downplays instrumental reason in movement emergence. Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci have been key scholars in the development of this paradigm. They argue that we are living in a postindustrial era, in which information has replaced production as the main issue. In this society, control over the means of production is less important than "control over the supply and processing of a certain type of data, hence of a way of organizing social life"(Touraine 1981:6). Touraine further argues that "classes struggle not only for accumulation over the products of labor, but also over symbolic products and over historicity (i.e. who will represent society to itself)" (1988:xviii). Touraine hopes to find *the* social movement which is going to replace the labor movement as the new historical agent. However, he sees the apparatus of technocratic management as the main enemy of the new movements (1981:22).

Latin American scholars who have followed the identity-oriented paradigm may have been influenced more by the work of Alberto Melucci, a student of Touraine, in that they interpret social movements as a form of resistance to the processes of development and to the

penetration of the State and the capitalist market into social life (Alvarez & Escobar 1992; Jelin 1990). Indeed, Melucci considers social movements to be a response to the penetration of the structure of domination of postindustrial society in private life and in social relations. Indeed, in the postindustrial mode of production, "control reaches beyond the productive structure into the areas of consumption, services, and social relations" (1980:218). Contrary to Touraine, Melucci does not look for the movement which is going to replace the labor movement. In the same line as Touraine, who argued that movements' action is not directed towards a conquest of power from the State but the search for an alternative to the society against which they are fighting (1981:80), Melucci argues that we cannot speak of success or failure of social movements because their mere existence is already a success. Indeed, their submerged network-like form, especially in their periods of latency, functions as "laboratories of cultural innovations." It is "a possibility of another experience of time, space, interpersonal relations, which opposes the operational rationality of apparatuses" (1984:830). In that sense, their form is not just instrumental but is a goal in itself (*ibid.*).

The dichotomy between the resource mobilization and the new social movement paradigms in social movement research corresponds to the schism between explanatory and interpretive social science. Zald (1992) characterizes resource mobilization theory as a natural system theory, with an instrumental and utilitarian approach, which he opposes to the semiotic sciences, that deal with meaning, and to the physical sciences. The new social movement approach deals with issues of meaning construction and subjective experience of identity.

Dichotomies are dear to Western thought (Garcia-Canclini 1993; Roseberry 1989). In the case of anthropological theory, Roseberry points out the problems of antinomic thinking as it "fortif[ies] the appearance of mutually exclusive sets of assumptions and foreclos[es] the



possibility of mediation" (Roseberry 1989:31). Social movement scholars have earlier expressed skepticism about the possibility of bridging the gap between the neoutilitarian strategy paradigm and the collective identity paradigm (Cohen 1985; Jenkins 1983). Recently, however, mediation has been taking place. This is especially appropriate because the two paradigms are asking complementary questions roughly corresponding to a "how" (do social movements function (RMT)?) and "why" (do social movements emerge (NSM)?) (Escobar 1992; Morris & McClurg Mueller 1992; Foweraker 1995). The introductory chapter to the Morris & McClurg Mueller collection specifically considers the bringing together of the "semiotic and natural sciences of social movement" (1992:5) as one of the goals to be pursued for a reformulation of social movement theory.

Both resource mobilization theory and new social movement theories are useful for my own work since I consider issues of collective identity and solidarity, as well as the culture change process that movements engage in, as key issues when considering social movements in general and the role of NGOs in social movements. On the other hand, I drew on RMT studies which did pay more attention to the issue of movement professionalization and external financing and their impact on movements strategies, tactics and outcomes. I wish to discuss the points of juncture between NSM and RMT which facilitate the rapprochement of the two paradigms for a more complete understanding of social movement dynamics, which I believe is necessary. A focus on the intermediate level of analysis, i.e. at the small group/organization level, is particularly relevant in this regard. It is an essential level of analysis in this study, although the unit of analysis does shift from the individual, to the organization, to the movement.

### Bridging the Gap in Social Movement Research

As I have noted before, both NSM and RMT share, contrary to earlier approaches, a belief that social movements are rational actors. The concept of conflict is also crucial to both approaches, as recognized by Cohen & Arato (1992 cited in Foweraker 1995: 21) and Diani (1992:8). I have discussed elsewhere how, from an emotional/psychological standpoint, conflict eases the reformulation of meaning and the assimilation of social change (Lebon 1993). The conflicts of interest of RMT, and the disruption of people's lives through intrusion by the State and the market posited by NSM, are linked reasons behind the emergence of social movements (Lebon 1993).

From an analytical point of view, a third point of juncture between the NSM and RMT lies in focusing the analysis at the intermediate level, between the individual and structure, i.e. at the level of the organization or group. This is what I have tried to do in this study. Both RMT and NSM theorists have considered this important focus in recent years (McAdam et al 1988; Melucci 1988; Morris & McClurg Mueller 1992). As McAdam and his colleagues argue: "we can no more build social movements from the individual up than down from some broad societal process" (1988:709). Since not all individuals under similar conditions participate, the question is what makes individuals participate in collective action? RMT theorists who so far had not paid much attention to this question have started to do so as I will explain in the coming paragraphs. Melucci (1988) underlines that this question has been a dilemma in Marxist theory whenever one tried to examine the link from class condition to class consciousness. The two solutions proposed were either the Leninist concept of a necessary leading vanguard, or

the idea, posited by Rosa Luxemburg, that people have a spontaneous capacity to mobilize in the face of discontent and injustice posited.

We have seen that RMT argues that there are always grievances in a society, therefore a grievance does not explain why individuals engage in collective action. RMT's second step is to argue that what counts in the emergence of collective action, then, is not grievances but the possibilities and constraints on collective action that exist in a given situation. This is where RMT proponents introduce the notions of "structures of opportunity," "discretionary resources" and fields of constraints. Thus RMT identifies the need for an intermediate level (between the individual and the structural level). However, it considers that these structures of opportunity and discretionary resources are objective when in fact, Melucci (1988) argues, they are socially constructed. Expectations of any type are socially constructed and are a function of people's identity. It is people in small groups, mostly in the private sphere, who develop shared notions of what is problematic and what is possible and what is not and how they will go about changing things. This is the process of collective identity formation posited by NSM. It would probably be labeled formation of class consciousness by Marxists. Hence, collective identity is "an interactive and shared definition produced by several individuals and concerned with the orientations of action and the field of opportunities and constraints in which the action takes place" (Melucci 1988:342). It is on the basis of this collective cognitive framework that actors will calculate the costs and benefits of the action. However, Melucci reminds us, there are elements of participation in collective action which cannot be reduced to instrumental rationality. A sense of belonging and solidarity are essential characteristics of social movements.

Recently, RMT theorists (Morris & McClurg Mueller 1992) have studied small informal groups and their capacity to generate collective frameworks under the label of micro-mobilization contexts. Others, such as Snow and Benford (1992) are interested in the whole process of redefining the social construction of grievances, opportunities and constraints, which they labeled frame alignments. Hence, they set out to incorporate subjective issues prominent in the new social movement approach, such as the construction of meanings, solidarity and consciousness, into the RMT framework. Similarly, despite the importance he gives to the "external" elements of political opportunity structure, Tarrow (1994) does incorporate the fact that collective action is "culturally inscribed and communicated" (ibid:19) and that leaders draw on a repertoire of collective action possibilities which is related to the culture in which the movement evolves, as essential elements in the formation and maintenance of social movements. He also considers the importance of "trust and cooperation generated among participants by shared understandings" (ibid:21). Thus, he does include both solidarity and collective identity in his framework although they are not central elements to it. In other words, RMT made an effort to incorporate core issues of the identity paradigm. However, the issue is not resolved; rather, some ways have been devised to bring together strategy and identity (McClurg Mueller 1992:5).

This discussion of the intermediate level of analysis might have led to the erroneous conclusion that the creation of a collective identity necessarily precedes social actors' strategizing. In other words, there would be a linear model of development of social movements involving identity formation as a precondition to strategy decisions. As several social movement scholars have pointed out there is no such "dual logic" or linear model (Cohen & Arato 1992; Doimo 1995; Foweraker 1995). Social movements are both expression

of group identity and conflict of interest, simultaneously expressive and instrumental, i.e. identity and strategy, simultaneously cultural and political. Foweraker writes: "[...] identity cannot simply be conceived as a precondition of strategic action, because the processes of organization and strategic choice contribute crucially to construct and shape this identity" (1995:22).

### Disruption versus Integration in the Political System

Just as concerns with identity and strategy are present simultaneously in social movements, the correlated drives for disruption of the existing order and for inclusion in the political system are also there at the same time. Cohen calls them defensive and offensive movements (cited in Foweraker 1995:22). Ana Maria Doimo (1995), in her noted study of Brazilian popular movements, clearly demonstrates their two faces, one "expressive-disruptive", which searches to delegitimize public authorities, the other "integrative-corporative", which strives for greater social integration and interacts with the State to obtain better services.

Which face of this Janus will take precedence, according to Doimo, depends basically on the political opportunity structure. She shows that the transition to formal democracy in Brazil led to a strengthening of the integrative-corporative side, which, throughout the dictatorship period, had been kept in low profile. This is in line with Tilly's view of the importance of historical conditions in determining the forms collective action takes (in Foweraker 1995:14) and Tarrow's political process model. In other words, there is no inevitable linear model leading movements from protest to "acquiescence," no inevitable institutionalization.

### Social Movement Fields

Moving beyond the debate between the identity and strategy paradigms, social movements have been recently couched in terms of "social movement fields" (Alvarez 1998a, Sader 1988). The concept of social movement field<sup>1</sup> is particularly useful to this study because it directly addresses the issue of movement heterogeneity which has often been overlooked and which is essential to a study of the São Paulo women's movement.

A social movement field can be defined as an ensemble of organizations, individuals, and networks who share key ideas but also have their divergences in goals, methods, and emphasis for struggle. Put otherwise, they share "'a common field of references and differences for collective action and political contestation" (Baierle 1992:19) still informed by a common normative imperative but [with] diverse practices and discourses [...]" (Alvarez 1996:33). The concept of "social movement industry," forged by RMT theorists, referring to fields of related social movement organizations (SMOs) which compete and cooperate with each other, points in the same direction (McAdam et al. 1988). However, this concept relies unnecessarily on organizational theory and therefore underestimates the importance of nonorganizational forms that a social movement takes (Oliver 1989).

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<sup>1</sup> A related concept of interest is that of ethical-political field which refers more broadly to a social movement and its network of sympathizers in mainstream institutions and other social movements who share similar ideas and discourses (Dagnino 1998).

### Organizations and the Formalization, Institutionalization and Professionalization of Social Movements

Brazilian feminist NGOs are organizations within the feminist movement. As such, they deserve to be understood in the light of the budding body of literature on the role of organizations in social movements. No consensus has yet been reached on the issue of how more formal, professional organizations arise within social movements and what their impact is. The discussion involves issues of relationship to the political arena, to the grassroots and, for professionalized organizations, to funding sources.

Suzanne Staggenborg (1988) identifies three processes which should be taken into consideration when looking at the trajectory of social movements and social movement organizations, although they are by no means an inevitable outcome. These are formalization, institutionalization and professionalization. Formalization is the process by which an informal group evolves towards more established rules, stricter membership requirements and higher division of labor. Linked to formalization is the issue of the role of organizations in social movements. Institutionalization is the process by which movements transform from outsiders into participants in mainstream political arenas. Professionalization is the process by which individuals come to be remunerated for their movement activities. A few studies have shown that these processes are complexly interrelated. I will sketch these relations here since they are essential themes in this study.

#### Formalization and Institutionalization

Earlier approaches considered institutionalization the inevitable outcome of movements' development, as ever more bureaucratized and oligarchic organizations would

bring the movement into the traditional political arena. However, a more flexible model has been offered since then by resource mobilization theorists, which links a social movement more closely to its environment, mainly the State, countermovements and the personal networks of activists.

Starting with the more pessimistic view of the role of organizations in social movements, the Weber-Michels thesis, based on Weber's theory of bureaucracy and routinization of charisma and on Michels' "iron law of oligarchy" (1959 [1915]) claimed that professionalization and bureaucratization of democratic organizations are inescapable because of the needs arising within the organization and because of its needs to relate to the outer world. Michels argues that the goals, the structure and the tactics of a group are shaped by its organizational survival imperatives and that these tendencies have a conservatizing effect. Moreover, organizations have a tendency to oligarchic rule: leaders become indispensable because of their knowledge about how the bureaucracy works. Thus, they cannot be removed from office even when they no longer represent the ideas of the rank-and-file. Leaders will also tend to try to consolidate their interests within the organization, at times not remaining true to the principles of the base.

Similarly, Piven and Cloward's work (1979) with the workers, civil rights and welfare rights movements in the United States in the 60s gave examples of how the formal organizations created "on the crest" of these movements limited their disruptive force. They argue that formal organizations are less defiant, and that defiance and disruption are the means by which the less powerful in society can bring change about. The State's co-optation of movement activists through concessions brings the movement into regular politics, thus bringing protesters into the system. Using a similar argument, Tarrow (1994) claims that social



movements end up evolving in the sphere of politics because the government responds to their claims in one way or another (either through reform or repression, most often through a combination of the two). Taking a historical vantage point he writes: "For brief periods of history the power in movement seems irresistible; but it disperses rapidly and passes inexorably into more institutional forms of politics" (ibid: 191). He adds that social movements have less influence over the outcome of the struggle in this sphere of politics. Often times, they are not interested in using these tactics. In order to get policy changes, movements may opt for cooperation rather than confrontation; this diminishes their "capacity to inspire supporters and to hold the attention of elites" because they accept compromises (ibid:113). But he adds, there are also compensations for choosing the institutional domain as more conventional forms of action bring out broader, general support in the population.

Zald and Ash (1987 [1964]) refuted Michels' claims and argued that an organization evolves in relation with its environment. Its trajectory need not be limited to routinization and oligarchization but can take various directions such as "coalitions with other organizations, organizational disappearance, factional splits, increased rather than decreased radicalism and the like" (ibid:122). The trajectory outlined by Michels is only one in many possibilities and it is likely to occur when movements are becalmed, i.e. when they "have found a niche for themselves in the organizational world but their growth has slowed down or ceased" (ibid:130). According to Zald and Ash dependence on and control of material incentives facilitate oligarchization and conservatism. Oligarchization occurs because leaders have an interest in conserving power for material reasons, and conservatism occurs because radical goals might threaten the niche of the movement by provoking hostility in society. Indeed Michels' work was based on trade-unions and political parties at the beginning of the 20th

century. Studies have shown that his views on oligarchization of organizations do not hold for organizations with idealistic goals such as religious organizations (Carden 1989).

More generally, social movement organizations can take many different forms, different from the "charismatic leader-devoted follower relationship" (Jenkins 1979:226). As Jenkins put it: "oligarchy in movements means that leaders can act independently of members, not that they will inevitably oppose insurgency. Though the conversion of movements into lobby organizations and the subsequent abandonment of insurgent goals is clearly a hazard of formal structure, it is a decision, not an inevitability" (Ibid.).

Some authors go even further and argue for a positive role of organizations in social movement under certain conditions. In one of the few statements about movement development in new social movement theory Melucci argues that "umbrella organizations" are important to secure the continuity of the movements during periods of latency. These "umbrella organizations" "provide financial and organizational resources" for the activities of the movements and they "translate their claims into political decision-making, while the movements maintain their autonomy" (Melucci 1984:831). He created the concept of "intermediate public space" that would fit between the State and "civil society" in which such umbrella organizations would be located (ibid). Similarly, Staggenborg (1988) also mentions that professional organizations allow the movement to survive the lulls of volunteer mobilization and to seize new opportunities for battle whenever they arise.

This study supports Jenkins' contention that the transformation of movements into lobbying groups is a clear danger when movements formalize but that this is not an inevitable process. It is too early to tell whether the movement organizations of this study will play a

remobilizing/organizing role when the time is ripe. In the Brazil of the 90s, the evidence points to their turning away from such classical movement orientation.

### Professionalization

RMT, which has focused most on issues of professionalization, considers professional social movement organizations (hereafter PSMOs) as one of the possible forms that SMOs can take, not necessarily as a result of institutionalization (McAdam et al 1988). McCarthy and Zald define the general characteristics of PSMOs as: "(1) a leadership that devotes full time to the movement; (a) a large proportion of resources originating outside of the aggrieved group that the movement claims to represent; (2) a very small or nonexistent membership base or a paper membership (membership implies little more than allowing name to be used upon membership rolls); (3) attempts to impart the image of "speaking for a potential constituency"; (4) attempts to influence policy toward that same constituency" (McCarthy and Zald 1987 [1973]:375).

McCarthy and Zald further argue that with professionalization, careers are made possible, training institutions are established, and national networks of "movement personnel" are created as activists get jobs in various organizations over time, activists also go back and forth between jobs in government agencies, in other institutions and in movement organizations (ibid.: 372).. In a country such as Brazil, such a career remain highly unstable, although some activists do get subsequent positions with various organizations.

Based on the results of this research, I mostly agree with their definition, although their assertion that professionalized social movement organizations attempt to impart the image of speaking for a political constituency must be mitigated in the case at hand by the role the

authorities have played in calling upon such professionalized organizations to represent the movement.

A number of factors have been identified which can lead to the professionalization of social movements. New Social Movement theory has not paid much attention to the issue of professionalization. For Melucci, it is the success of movements in the political arena which leads to professionalization and bureaucratization of part of a movement, as it weakens and becomes fragmented, while some splinter groups become more radical (1984:831). Similarly, the earlier collective behavior theorists did not discuss the issue of professional activists at any length. They assumed that funding for the remuneration of these activists originated internally to the movement. As Lenin did, they considered that these individuals should be drawn from the base, and belonged to the more experienced, more committed activists who had an interest in being involved full-time in movement activities (Oliver 1983).

McCarthy and Zald (1987 [1973]) challenged these ideas when they focused on the trend towards professionalization of social movement organizations in the United States in the 60s (noticed by other authors at the time, see Oliver 1983:134). They identified the availability of funding through churches, foundations and government agencies as the primary factor for the emergence of "full-time careers" in social movements, while movement leaders became "social movement entrepreneurs" (McCarthy and Zald 1987 [1973]:374). RMT views paid activists as individuals being drawn to the movement by these material incentives. They are less committed than volunteers because volunteers have only purposive incentives to participate as opposed to both purposive and material incentives for remunerated activists (empirically confirmed by some studies, e.g. Wilson 1973). Professionalized organizations become more inclusive, rather than exclusive. This means that they require "partial commitment and relatively

little in the way of requirements" (McCarthy and Zald 1987: 373), thus changing the meaning of membership to the group (ibid: 370). Professionalized activists are also viewed as more divorced from the community. However, RMT scholars were forced to acknowledge dimensions of professional activism which reflect a strong commitment on the part of paid activists: some mention the "sacrifice" made by activists who receive a wage much below what they would earn outside the movement. Even McCarthy and Zald (1987 [1973]) recognize that movement participants do search for ways to be remunerated for their activities in the movement (Oliver 1983).

Oliver's own work showed that aspects of both collective behavior theory and resource mobilization theory were needed to understand how a movement professionalizes: In her research among activists from the US neighborhood movement, she showed that paid activists did grow out from among movement volunteers, were no less committed and no less divorced from the community than volunteers. However, the availability of funding for social movements in the 1960s definitely allowed the emergence of a cohort of activists, who coming of age at that time, were able to make the choice of building their career within the movement (Oliver 1983). This study will explore issues such as where professionalized activists come from, and how committed and how close they are to the grassroots in the case of the São Paulo women's movement

Other elements identified as conducive to the creation of a professionalized organization are the failure to mobilize a membership base (Cable 1984) or to sustain a movement (McCarthy and Zald 1987 [1973]). Staggenborg (1988) showed that the formalization of the US pro-choice movement deepened as the movement was pushed into institutionalized arenas by changing environmental conditions (mainly the legalization of

abortion in 1973). In the case of the Brazilian women's movement, I will also consider changes in the political opportunity structure, namely the process of transition to and consolidation of formal democracy.

### Consequences of Professionalization

As I have mentioned earlier, formalization, professionalization and institutionalization are interrelated. According to Staggenborg (1988), professionalization is linked to formalization because financing agencies prefer groups that have a certain logistical structure which allows permanent contacts as well as accounting services and a minimum division of labor. Professional staff will want the organization to formalize in order to obtain financial stability and a "division of labor that allows them to use and develop their organizational skills" (p.603). In reverse, more structured organizations have an easier time searching and obtaining funding and hence for continuing to hire professionals.

The relationship between formalization and institutionalization is that, Staggenborg argues, more formal, professional groups are likely to enter the arena of institutional politics and forgo more disruptive forms of protest. They do so in part because their structure allows them to engage in such tactics (they have on-going contacts, the necessary division of labor and their working hours fit with those of institutional politics) and in part because they like it better because such activities are more compatible with regular working hours, they can be scheduled in advance and expenses can be planned. In part they do not want to threaten the survival of their entity by engaging in protest action (McCarthy and Zald 1987 [1973]). Again, these tendencies are clear dangers of professionalized organizations, including in the case at hand. Yet, they are not inescapable but are linked to the political opportunity structure, in our case,

the transition to formal democracy and changes in donor agencies' funding policies and practices. Indeed, some professionalized organizations, such as Greenpeace, have managed to combine disruptive and lobbying tactics. We also need to consider the consequences of professionalization of social movements on the cultural struggle that they engage in. This will be discussed in the second part of this chapter dealing with culture and democratization.

An essential issue to consider when dealing with the professionalization of social movements is its impact on, or relationship to, volunteer activism, central to this dissertation. Professionalism should be considered as a complex concept since organizations rely to varying degrees on professional activists and on outside funding, and have different positions for remunerated activists or staff with different interests (Kleidman 1994; Oliver 1983; Staggenborg 1988).

Kleidman (1994) examined the issue of the impact of paid activism on voluntarism in detail. His typology of outcome parallels the discussion on the role of organizations in social movements and it is threefold: inhibition, substitution, and facilitation. His inhibition model groups together all the theories which argue that professionalization erodes volunteer activism. Most of them argue for a change in tactics accompanying professionalization which is a switch from mobilizing volunteers, i.e. citizens, to lobbying, work through the media or publishing. This change in tactics is attributed either to the efforts of leaders to maximize their career choices as in the Weber-Michels' thesis, to a paid staff more easily vulnerable to cooptation as in Piven and Cloward's work, or to the influence of elite funding (Jenkins 1987, 1979; McCarthy and Zald 1987[1973]).

The second model of impact of professionalization on volunteer activism that has been suggested is that professional organizations substitute for volunteer activists (Kleidman 1994).

Some resource mobilization theorists have used such a model which sees professional social movement organizations as representing the interests of deprived constituencies. Indeed, professionalization has been chosen as a solution when a mass base could not be mobilized (Cable 1984).

Kleidman's last model is the facilitation model: we have already mentioned that some scholars consider that organizations are necessary to mobilize people to protest and the role of "umbrella organizations" can play during periods of reflux of movements by carrying over the goals and ideals of the movement. Staggenborg argues (1988), professionalized organizations and social movements with a large number of professional organizations are likely to live longer. Staggenborg's work shows that if professionalized groups engage more in institutionalized politics, they do not necessarily cease to recruit volunteers, some professionals are in fact "organizers" so that their task is to bring in more participants. Other arguments in favor of professional organizations is that they have the capacity to train and organize volunteers and coordinate their activities, thus improving the chances of a positive outcome. They also facilitate joint actions among organizations as professionalized organizations can afford to have a permanent representative in the coalition and can dedicate more hours to the job (Staggenborg 1988).

Kleidman's point is that, contrary to earlier scholars who have emphasized either inhibition, substitution or facilitation, a combination of the three is more likely to occur (Kleidman 1994). The factors influencing the combination are elements of political opportunity, the level of mobilization in civil society and the strategies and values of the professional activists involved. His empirical work shows that over the last fifty years, three professional organizations from the US peace movement used different strategies regarding volunteer



activism, deliberately expanding it or reducing its influence in the movement. In the case of the peace movement he studied, separate campaigning organizations were created by peace organizations. My study shows that, in the case of the Brazilian women's movement, after approximately 10 years of a professionalizing trend, the latter has indeed inhibited volunteer activism. I do agree with Kleidman, however, that it could be different if the groups deliberately chose to promote mobilization and, maybe more importantly, had the unconditional support of donor agencies in this endeavour. This is however, not currently the case.

### The Role of Funding

Pam Oliver (1983) identified three main forms of financing for social movements: internal, external market and external sponsor financing. The NGOs I worked with rely on what she called external sponsor financing. This means funding by large institutions such as churches, foundations, governments or corporations, or less frequently by wealthy individuals. Indeed, no more than 20 percent of these NGOs' budgets derived from the other two modes of financing. In fact, part of the professionalization process of feminist NGOs has involved reducing their reliance on internal financing while increasing that of external sponsor financing.

Internal financing involved such activities as sales of T-shirts or other goods and services produced by participants, as well as fairs, games (bingo) etc. NGOs no longer engage in this type of fund-raising activities while the volunteer organizations I worked with still do, although they too now rely mostly on grant moneys from donor agencies. The difference lies in the amount received and in the fact that volunteer groups, do not remunerate their participants with this money. External market financing is when a movement relies on a large number of small contributions from individuals outside the movement or by selling products or services

whose labor has been paid a fair wage (Oliver 1983). NGOs have been pushed by donor agencies to increase their sales of professional services and products in order to boost their self-sustainability. This kind of funding leaves organizations vulnerable to changes in the economy which affect peoples' income and to the instability of resource flows (McCarthy and Zald 1977) and is hardly feasible in a country such as Brazil with high rates of material poverty.

I will expand on the consequences of external sponsor financing, since this is what donor funding to professionalized organizations (NGOs) amounts to. Since we are talking about democratization and social change, the issue that comes to mind is that of elite control of movements to ensure a top-down monitored change.

According to McCarthy and Zald who have focused on this issue in the case of the U.S. civil rights and other movements in the 1960s, the main consequence of external financing is that the base loses control over the leadership of the organization while leaders have to demonstrate their credibility to donors. They write: "outside financial support, indeed, means that a membership in the classical sense is almost dispensable they argue. Outside funding allows a leadership to replace volunteer manpower drawn from the base with paid staff members chosen upon criteria of skills and experience" (1987 [1973]: 371). Similarly Schwartz and Paul (1992) argue that recruiting money or recruiting people's time entail different strategies. They argue that organizations who receive money from a sponsor do not feel the need to recruit members. On the other hand, outside financial support means that the organization will be able to survive even when beneficiaries' claims have been satisfied.

This dependence on elites for funding and independence from a mass support base increase the possibility of elite social control on professional social movement organizations (McCarthy & Zald 1987 [1973]: 384-385). They believe that established institutional sectors,

such as foundations and churches, would not support radical organizations for long periods of time because they are themselves subject to institutional control. They believe that such funding has ameliorative rather than radical purposes and is meant to channel dissent into legitimate channels as elites search to "diffus[e] the radical possibilities of dissent in general" (1987: 385). However, some of that support is indirectly diverted to organizations with more radical goals, as when both types of groups engage in coalition work for example. This means that radical groups have more resources available than if there was no effort on the part of the elite to control dissent.

Staggenborg (1988) argues that in the case of the US pro-choice movement, informal groups are the ones who pressured to obtain concessions from the elite and hence to get funding available but it is the formal, professional organizations which benefited from these monies. This reinforces the claim by Haines (1984) of a "radical flank effect" theory. Haines argues that the presence of extremist organizations will be beneficial to more moderate organizations in the same social movement because they will look more appealing to foundations in order to undermine more radical groups.

Jenkins and Eckert argue that the elite control thesis is mostly correct but somewhat simplistic and prefer the term "channeling" because "the social control effects of patronage, are more subtle and indirect than a simple co-optation" (1986:828). We need to dissociate "control as the intention of patrons vs. control as the consequence of patronage" (1986:813). They found, in the case of the Black movement in the 1960s, that elite financing did not change movement goals and tactics significantly, protests continued after elite patronage started, although riots stopped due mostly to government repression. On the other hand, elite financing went mostly to moderate, professionalized organizations, and might have accelerated

movement decay because it diverted leaders from organizing efforts, exacerbated rivalries and created symbolic gains. I will consider, in Chapter 8, to what extent international donor agencies are controlling, or channeling, intentionally or not, the goals and strategies of feminist NGOs and hence of a substantial segment of the Brazilian women's movement.

### Anthropology and Social Movement Research

John Burdick (1995) made a strong case for anthropologists to be involved with social movement research. He argues that the wave of peasant movements' studies in the 1970s (e.g. Wolf 1969) was followed by a quasi-vacuum in terms of anthropological study of organized popular movements. The tide is rising again though, as a number of works have started filling this vacuum in recent years. In fact, Burdick argues, the ascent of the moral economy and resistance literature has pushed anthropologists towards the study of "everyday," unorganized and mostly noncollective forms of resistance (e.g. Taussig 1980). Burdick sees here the influence on our discipline of Michel Foucault's "power-is-everywhere" model, as well as a general skepticism towards the effectiveness of collective action, as well as anthropology's "penchant for the slow-moving and microscopic" (Burdick 1995:361). Yet, anthropologists could contribute significantly to the study of social movements, in particular to understand the way cultural practices/texts informs collective action and to elicit the heterogeneity in social movements, which has often been overlooked by social movement scholars.

### Culture, Agency, and Social Movements

Cultural images, symbols, and practices are used and constantly reshaped by the dominant classes in order to maintain the status quo (Roseberry 1989:76), while others use and

transform this cultural baggage in a counterhegemonic fashion (Garcia-Canclini 1993, Kertzer 1988). Garcia-Canclini defines "culture as a particular type of production, whose objective is to understand, reproduce, and transform the social structure and to struggle for hegemony" (1993:1). In gramscian terms, hegemony can be defined as a situation in which "a class [...] is politically dominant and [...] is able to monopolize the cultural symbols and the socialization process of a society" (Kertzer 1980:254).

As Richard Fox puts it, culture is thus 'always in the making' as actors struggle for material and symbolic domination. However, a certain degree of continuity is maintained because "much of daily existence simply follows the path of least social resistance, the way defined by domination, as E.P. Thompson suggests" (Fox 1985:203).

The theory of practice (Bourdieu 1977, 1990) is useful in understanding how culture can change or be maintained. According to Bourdieu, representations and practices are generated by a few underlying, non-explicated, common schemes, which he calls *habitus*. These schemes are inculcated, during socialization in early childhood, through practices (i.e. in and by the body), and reinforced through repetition and enactment. They are 'learned by body', for some, even before language is available. The fact that they are learned by body, and enacted through the body, by mimetism (i.e. not by simple imitation but by an internalization of the principles), puts these schemes mostly out of reach of consciousness for the actor. They create 'visceral tastes and distastes' as Joan Cassell (1996: 43) brilliantly demonstrates in the case of gender roles. These tastes and distastes are not arbitrary though. They reflect basic social distinctions and power differentials that accompany them (adult/young, male/female, rich/poor, white/black). They of course tend to favor the dominant pole of social distinctions. Bourdieu calls 'doxa' (1977:163) the situation where such schemes and practices are not questioned, not

even susceptible of being questioned, because they seem 'natural'. The rules are taken for granted, therefore not challenged, and cultural codes tend to be relatively stable.

However, this state of affairs is modified through contestation by different groups, which brings in the open these schemes and related practices. According to Bourdieu, this contestation is more likely to happen when there is a political or economic crisis which destroys the fit between the objective conditions and the customary social practices and their underlying schemes. For others, like Fox (1985), inspired by Alain Touraine, this contestation is constantly happening. I agree that contestations are always present but some carry more weight than others and some do not amount to much change until they reach a sufficient number of people. I believe that periods of crisis or of rapid social/economic change do help unveiling doxic 'truths' and facilitate contestations.

When such contestation occurs, "the specific efficacy of subversive action consists in the power to bring to consciousness, and so modify, the categories of thought which help to orient individual and collective practices and in particular the categories through which distributions are perceived and appreciated" (Bourdieu 1990:141). Social movements are cases in which cultural symbols and practices are questioned and thus transformed by a group of individuals.<sup>2</sup> Together with a struggle over material goods, social movements also represent "a deliberate, organized, conscious effort by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture," to use a definition which Wallace (1956:265) ascribed to revitalization movements.

As I have discussed earlier, new social movement theorists have consistently argued that social movements are engaging in this cultural struggle and resource mobilization

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<sup>2</sup> I do not wish in this argument to reduce social movements to their cultural dimension. As I have argued earlier they are political in the traditional sense of the term as well.

advocates, who used to argue that social movements only represented conflicts of interests over material conditions, now recognize the importance of the cultural production aspect of social movements (Morris & McClurg Mueller 1992; Tarrow 1994). Some political scientists (Alvarez et al. 1998; Alvarez 1993; Dagnino 1994a, 1994b, 1998; Waylen 1994), are moving away from a narrow definition of politics to include microlevel processes within both the public and the private spheres, hence including elements which earlier would have been considered as cultural. Traditionally, politics and democracy were defined in terms of institutions within the public sphere only (Waylen 1994). Democracy is then no longer held to be ensured by the right to vote and other institutional arrangements. It needs to be "deepened" when "social authoritarianism" permeates all social relations, i.e. when hierarchy and inequality pervade the cultural practices through which people relate to each other in everyday life as it is the case in Brazil (Dagnino 1994a). Thus, a broader definition of democracy encompasses power distribution in micro-level situations not only along class lines but also along gender, race, age and other dimensions. Feminist activists have long understood the relationship between culture and politics as they expressed in their slogan "the personal is political".

In Brazil, social movements and grassroots organizations have played an important part in the return to formal democracy. Many scholars have documented the long-term potential of social movements and grassroots organizations to bring about such democratizing social change (Jaquette 1994; Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Safa 1990; Slater 1985). It is now generally accepted that the social movement literature, especially in the 1970s/1980s, was characterized by a celebratory mood sometimes romanticizing social movements as harbingers of social and political change, probably expecting too much from these movements in terms of changes in the political arena, disregarding their internal difficulties and other limitations. The pendulum

started to shift in the late 80s, maybe even too far in the opposite direction, as a number of writings focused on the "decline," and difficulties of social and popular movements (see review articles by Haber 1996, Roberts 1997 on literature of Latin American social movements).

Again, a more sober look at the democratizing potential and internal dynamics of movements was indeed in order, however as Kathryn Hochstetler argues, social movements' "recent decline gains dimension from the height of [...] past hopes" (1997:25). Ton Salman (1994:26) also warns against such disillusioned overreaction.

There is no doubt that the unifying goal of toppling down the military dictatorship disappeared in 1985, and that allegiances to different political parties not only divided movement activists but also siphoned off some of the movements' energy into the political sphere, notably political parties. Moreover, with the consolidation of formal democracy, traditional political actors regained more control over the situation, limiting the institutional changes that radical movements could achieve. The economic difficulties experienced by the poor as a result of neoliberal policies and the dire consequences of the retreat of Christian Base Communities (CEBs) which had been crucial mobilizing spaces for popular movements in the 70s and 80s can also not be ignored. There is also no doubt that social movements strategic innovations after 1985 have "push[ed] the limits of many conventional definitions and expectations of social movements" (Hochstetler 1997:14) thus leading many to believe in their "decline." Four such new participatory strategies she identifies are nongovernmental organizations, participation on government councils, international networking and land occupations (ibid.). As Hochstetler herself points out, these strategies are by far more problematic, more ambiguous, as democratizing agents than protest, mass-based, "autonomous" movements, whose potential is believed to stem from their participatory nature,



from microlevel changes they entail for participants, and from their relative autonomy from mainstream institutions (Carroll 1992; Hellman 1992). In fact, this study hopes to assess two such participatory strategies, namely NGOs within the feminist movement and their international linkages. As Hochstetler further argues, we should not overlook that new movements, in the classical sense of the term, with street protests and mass mobilizations, have also appeared on the scene, such as the successful campaign for the impeachment of President Collor in 1992 or the Landless Movement (*Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terra - MST*).

From a different point of view, the "decline" of social movements in Brazil after 1985 can be partially attributed to the focus on institutional outcome of many observers, and hence, going back to our original topic of the relationship between culture and politics, to a narrow understanding of what constitutes politics and of the constitutive role of culture in politics (Dagnino 1998). Even Ton Salman's insightful discussion of women's empowerment yet limited political learning<sup>3</sup> as participants of urban popular organizations in Chile's shantytowns, reveals an emphasis on the institutional impact of these organizations, despite his acknowledgement that "More profoundly than in the past [...], social and local relations will support political as well as pragmatic, everyday aspirations" and that "focusing on changing identities, gradually shifting habitus, and the acquisition of competences provides a more tedious but also a more concrete anchor for understanding change" (Salman 1994:24).

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<sup>3</sup> He writes that "these processes [of empowerment linked to participation in movements] did not alter their inability to challenge the patterns of politics they identified as alienating, oppressing, excluding, or power focused" (Salman 1994:17). They did not enter the political arena in the strict sense of the term.

The latest contribution by Alvarez, Dagnino and Escobar (1998) provides the link between the micro and the macro, politics and culture, via the cultural politics of social movements and political culture. Evelina Dagnino (1998) demonstrates how urban popular movements have helped redefine the notion of citizenship and rights, how they have transformed the perception of social needs as rights thus undermining clientelistic political practices. She shows that this has clear consequences for electoral politics and the control over elected representatives. Popular movement activists, she argues, are challenging the boundaries of the political by including the need to end social discrimination (race-based, class-based or otherwise) in their struggle for citizenship. They do not consider that the presence of political parties and electoral processes is sufficient to define a democracy. In that sense, social movements have been playing a considerable role in changing political culture.

### Social Movements Heterogeneity

Social movements participate in the production of culture, and conversely, the forms collective action takes are related to the cultural matrix from which they are arising. This is a domain where anthropologists can make a difference, examining how already existing cultural practices/texts "can serve as a springboard for community organizing and collective action" (Burdick 1993:30). Indeed, collective action is not "born out of organizers' heads but is culturally inscribed and communicated. The learned conventions of collective action are part of a society's public culture" writes Sydney Tarrow (1994:18). Collective action and organizational forms are also historically inscribed: 19th century Parisians innovated with barricades, factory workers formed trade unions and went on strike, Gandhi innovated with non-violent protest (Kertzer 1988; Tarrow 1994). Similarly, organizational forms are

influenced by the social characteristics of their participants, such as class, gender, race, and age. As a result, social movements reflect the heterogeneity of the culture and participants they emerge from.

Social movement scholars have tended to gloss over the heterogeneity of social movements' mobilized and unmobilized constituencies (Burdick 1993; Wiener 1994). Yet, paying attention to heterogeneity would give an invaluable insight into a movement's potential for dynamism or the reasons for its mobilizational problems (Burdick 1993). Burdick further argues that this is where anthropologists should step in since they are particularly well-equipped to explore local patterns of social heterogeneity using the ethnographic method and through the concept of culture in the making as defined earlier.

June Nash (1992) exemplifies how anthropologists can explore the heterogeneity of social movements. In her study of the resistance of Bolivian mining communities against structural adjustment measures imposed by the International Monetary Fund, she listened to the miners, the peasants, the students and the women involved, but also to the leaders of the resistance movement and to the base and contrasted their strategies, tactics and ideas. She also elicited the different meanings that different categories of participants gave to the movement and to the events underway and how this is related to their practices and strategies.

Similarly, my study hopes to draw on the voices of several sectors of the women's health movement in São Paulo, its leaders, its professionalized activists, its volunteer activists, as well as members of middle class and popular feminist groups and of different age and ethnic groups to draw a picture of the impact of professionalization for these different actors.

### Importance of Practice in Collective Action

The cultural transformation that social movements engage in, this struggle for a more democratic social order in everyday life, takes place through actions and practices, as well as through attitudinal changes. In fact, Nash argues that "in trying to understand social movements, we must abandon the analytic distinction between social behavior and culturally encoded symbolic form" (1992:291). She reaffirms the link between meaning and action.

Rational choice theory starts with the premise that action or behavior follows people's attitudes or preferences (Ferree 1992:35)--This takes us back to our discussion of a nonlinear model of development of social movements from identity to strategy--. However, beliefs and preferences are neither stable, nor consistent, they are oftentimes shifting and in conflict with one another in people's minds (Ferree 1992, Kertzer 1988:68). Therefore, it is important to also consider practices. In fact, people have shown a great ability to syncretize different symbolic systems, i.e. to deal with contradictory or conflicting ideas (Kertzer 1980:255) so that "consistency comes through common action" (Kertzer 1988:68).

Going one step further, some scholars have argued that "getting people to act can, under some conditions, literally change what and how they see" and that activists have long known and used this knowledge (Ferree 1992:35). Hirsch stated that "action mobilization is frequently used to create consensus mobilization rather than the reverse" (Hirsch 1986 in Ferree 1992:35). Fantasia (1988) demonstrated clearly that collective action and interaction have an effect on people's consciousness and notably that people's consciousness was

substantially raised by collective action and interaction<sup>4</sup>. Fantasia (1988) labeled this concept "consciousness in action".

The reasons why people's actions are not only indicative or reinforcing what they think but also constitutive of what they think are to be searched for at the individual/psychological level, as well as at the social level. Practice theory helps us understand how people's actions are influencing people's minds. I have discussed how customary social practices express underlying principles without explicitly referring to them. It follows that body and language have the disposition to "function as depositories of deferred thoughts" (Bourdieu 1990:69). So that "re-placing the body in an overall posture [...] recalls the associated thoughts and feelings, in one of the inductive states of the body which, as actors know, give rise to states of mind" (ibid).

Moreover, people's actions are necessarily more public than their thoughts. When participants in a movement engage in collective action, i.e. demonstrate, strike, protest, they act publicly according to the rules of the organization. These acts "provide public statements of acceptance of a group's position" (Kertzer 1988:68), hence reinforcing one's identity with and one's commitment to the movement. Similarly, relating with one group identifies a person with that group so that it is difficult for participants of an organization/movement to interact with people from the opposite camp: "mixing and matching can be untenable" as Kertzer showed in the case of the relations between Communists and Catholics in Italy (Kertzer 1980:255). Kertzer goes so far as to say that "socially and politically speaking, we are what we do, not what we think." (ibid), although this is too strictly behaviorist a statement for me to endorse.

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<sup>4</sup> He showed that workers' stated limited willingness to strike and discontent with management and owners before collective action was underway, was unable to predict the strike that immediately followed.

### How Organizational Forms Influence Collective Identity and Solidarity.

Although issues of solidarity and collective identity have been explored since initial work by the early social scientists, especially Durkheim (1974 [1906]), the issue of how organization influences solidarity and collective identity remains a frontier in social movement theory (Morris & McClurg Mueller 1992).

Before going any further, I shall briefly outline my understanding of collective identity and solidarity. Collective identity is "the shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests, experiences and solidarity" (Taylor & Whittier 1992:105). Collective identity is at least partially empirically observable. It can be derived from the meaning people give to labels and other cultural symbols, in particular to what salient characteristics members of a group believe differentiate them, as a group, from the wider society and what their understanding of the group's actions is. Collective identity is also manifested through the language and symbols by which it is publicly expressed (Gamson 1992:60).

The alternative social and cultural framework of a social movement organization is reflected in its collective identity, in its programs, and embodied in its everyday practices and its organizational structure (Gamson 1992). Observing how collective identity and solidarity are expressed in daily behaviors and actions is just as essential as recording attitudinal statements. Style of headquarters, forms of address, behaviors denoting the nature of the rapport between support and grassroots groups' members, behaviors during interactions with public authorities, etc. all embody the collective identity and the level of solidarity of the group, and inter-groups.

I would define solidarity as "the relationships of affection, trust, reciprocity and moral obligation between human beings" (Boswell 1990:17). I consider that the type of solidarity encountered in social movements is closer to Durkheim's mechanical solidarity, that is the solidarity which arise from a sense of identity and commonness with other group members.

New social movement scholars have tended to pay attention mainly to grievances that led to movement emergence and need to consider the associational and organizational arrangements, the institutions and practices of social movements. New social movement theorist Alberto Melucci (1984) considers the form of social movements as being a goal in itself since it is a "challenge to the dominant patterns", opposing "the operational rationality of apparatuses" (1984:830): movements' informal network-like forms, with multiple leaderships, submerged in society, embody the anti-hierarchy, anti-bureaucratic principles of their participants, as they redefine and practice new forms of sociability.

Resource mobilization advocates have spent more time at examining different organizational forms but they do not consider the influence these different arrangements bear on collective identity, solidarity and ideology (MacAdam et al. 1988). Yet, organizational arrangements, institutions and practices are likely to influence the collective identity of the group, the consciousness and the solidarity of members as well as the group's actions (Fantasia 1988; Tarrow 1992). Consensual decision-making, in particular, an organizational feature essential to participatory organization has been shown to heighten group members' commitment to the decisions made, and hence to increase solidarity (Hechter 1987; Uphoff 1986). Kertzer also mentions participatory decision-making as a ritual of legitimation to give the appearance of including everybody in the decision-making process (1988:42).

Other practices linked to the internal structure of the group may alter the collective identity and solidarity of a group: indeed, some scholars have shown that certain organizational forms are related to the instrumental (or formal) rationality, motivated by self-interest, driving western capitalist society, whereas other forms are more attuned with value (or substantive) rationality, in the Weberian sense (i.e. when individuals' behaviors are driven by moral commitments other than self-interest) (Ferree 1992:33). Perrow (1986) showed that certain characteristics of capitalist firms, such as the measurement of individual contributions, the possibility of accumulating advantages, the creation of stable and hierarchical authority structures and minimized interactions, will encourage self-interest. On the other hand, Rothschild-Whitt (1979) identified the characteristics of collectivist-democratic organizations which oppose them to bureaucracies and encourage solidarity and other values. Such characteristics are authority based in the collective without hierarchical structure; homogeneity used as a method of social control, i.e. to limit potential conflicts; holistic and affective rather than segmented, role-based and instrumental social relationships among members; an incentive structure relying on purposive and solidary incentives, such as participating for "the cause", or for the sake of the collective, rather than on material incentives; minimal stratification in terms of pay and decision-making; minimal differentiation of jobs thus demystifying specialized knowledge.

How are professionalized organizations with their distinction between administrative and technical work, their clearer division of labor and the constraints imposed by financing agencies in reporting and accounting terms able to maintain a strong solidary collective identity? Especially when collective work is no longer construed solely as "a labor of love" as Rothschild-Whitt (1979:515) puts it, but "as a labor of love and bread". How is their alternative



framework affected by these organizational changes? These are questions which I will address in this work.

Another specific set of practices, rituals, have been shown to impinge on solidarity and commitment to a group (Kertzer 1988). Kertzer defines ritual in a very broad manner as "symbolic behavior that is socially standardized and repetitive" (1988:8). Drawing on the work of Blumer (1974) he includes "mass meetings, rallies, large demonstrations, and commemorative ceremonies" as rituals in the case of social movements (1988:72). Kertzer's theoretical approach follows Durkheim's who believed that since people are "dependent on others for their existence, [they] need to be reassured of the goodness of society. This "need for social communion" they obtain through common action. Only by periodically assembling together and jointly participating in such symbolic action can the collective ideas and sentiments be propagated" (Kertzer 1988:62).

According to Kertzer, ritual is particularly important for producing solidarity in the absence of consensus because the symbols used in rituals are ambiguous and can be interpreted differently by different participants, but on the other hand they have an emotional impact on people (Kertzer 1988:66). I would argue that there is a minimum of consensus necessary for solidarity to build up. But certainly there is space for an array of positions to be represented. The strong emotional dimension of rituals, and hence of certain collective action practices, influences participants' solidarity. For example participating in a demonstration emotionally impacts people as they jointly participate with so many other people in a particular struggle (Kertzer 1988:119). Participating with a large number of people boosts people's sense of self-importance, as participants are "on parade" (Kertzer 1988:68). This is particularly strong for women especially in societies where they have traditionally been confined to the private sphere.

It also engenders feelings of belonging reinforced by the "paraphernalia of ritual", i.e. "slogans, songs, cheers, expressive gestures, and uniforms" that symbolize "feelings of common identity and sympathy" the movement fosters (Blumer 1974:9-11 in Kertzer 1988:72).

As professionalized organizations are turning more towards lobbying and research activities than towards micro-level conscientization or protest activities, as they are moving away from "*atividades de rua*" (street activities), they might lose some of this solidarity building element which eases the maintenance of a strong social base for the movement which would allow for further democratization. Chapter 7 will address these issues.

### Conclusion

A full understanding of social movement dynamics requires combining resource mobilization theory (focusing on strategy) and new social movement theory (focusing on identity), not only because RMT has focused more on how social movements function and NSM has focused on why they emerge, but also because the collective identity of a group and its preferred strategies, tactics and practices are intimately linked and influence each other. Indeed, social movements are both expression of group identity and conflict of interest, simultaneously expressive and instrumental, simultaneously cultural and political. Moreover, while new social movement theory provided me with insights on issues of solidarity and collective identity which are essential when dealing with the maintenance of social movements, resource mobilization-based studies have analyzed issues of professionalization and of the impact of funding on social movements (albeit mostly in the US) in a very detailed fashion. Suzanne Staggenborg's (1988) study of the professionalization of the US pro-choice movement, and her distinction between professionalization, formalization and

institutionalization, as well as the feedback mechanisms among them provided my study with a great point of departure and of comparison. Jenkins and Eckert's (1986) notion of channeling of social movements by elite funding also proved very useful.

The following chapter will turn to the specifics of the case at hand, namely the Brazilian women's movement and its partial formalization/professionalization through the creation of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

### CHAPTER 3

#### NONGOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS AND THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

I believe that NGOs are the face of social movements in the 90s. I think that the distinction made between movement and NGO is often artificial. [...] Women's NGOs for example, today, I think that they are not really support organizations for the women's movement. They are the women's movement. The women's movement today is made up of women's NGOs and a few associations [leader of a feminist professionalized organization].

What is the basic difference between an NGO in Brazil and a social movement organization? It is that, in the end, in the very end, an NGO is a micro or a medium-sized firm. [...] You [professional feminists] have a place in our hearts, you are legitimate members of this movement... but you're not the boss [active member of a volunteer feminist organization]

#### Introduction

At the close of the 80s, the term nongovernmental organization (NGO) was hardly ever heard among Brazilian feminist activists. There were feminist groups of various sorts but no NGOs. Yet, by 1992, when I conducted my preliminary field research, the term was out and tensions were starting to build up between NGO and volunteer feminists. And by the time I returned to Brazil, in September 1994, I heard complaints of full-blown *ongizaço* (NGOization) of the movement. What happened in the meantime is what I will try to sketch out in this chapter.

Before launching into the specifics of the Latin American situation, it is important to recall that the emergence of NGOs on the continent is part and parcel of a worldwide process, of a global "associational revolution" (Salomon & Anheier 1996:xi), linked to the "widespread loss of confidence in the State, expanding communications, the emergence of a

more vibrant commercial and professional middle class, and increased demands for a wide range of specialized services"(Salomon & Anheier 1996:129). From a more strictly political point of view, the end of the cold war is also understood as a major event which gave NGOs a chance to be more active in countries other than their own, without being accused of interference. They also were able to shine on the international political scene, namely at the United Nations, where security and nuclear threats receded to leave space for "low politics" in which NGOs had accumulated knowledge and experience (Gordenker & Weiss 1996). This chapter will present the specifics of the process of the emergence of NGOs in Brazil.

In chapter 2, I reviewed the lack of consensus concerning the relationship between organizations and social movements. The situation is even more confused when we deal with NGOs and their relationship to social movements in the Latin American context. This is all the more true in that the term NGO covers an incredible range of organizational realities. As a result, on the one hand, the very Association of Brazilian NGOs (ABONG), as well as a number of theorists in the field, argue that NGOs are not social movements (Foweraker 1995; Gordenker & Weiss 1996), while others argue that NGOs represent the new face of social movements given the new political make-up of Latin American fledgling democracies (Doimo 1995; Hochstetler 1997).

The landscape is murky indeed, even more so for the women's movement and other identity-based movements, such as the black movement, as I will argue further in this chapter. I will start by exploring the origins of this new social and political actor, the NGO, that emerged with the transition to formal democracy. I will then turn my focus onto the women's movement and how NGOs emerged within this movement. I will then consider the areas of fuzziness of the definition of NGOs among feminist activists and the ensuing

tensions, which correspond to criticisms or problematic issues raised by the academic literature on NGOs. In the end my understanding is that feminist NGOs are indeed part of the women's movement, although they are the most institutionalized and policy arena-oriented face of this movement.

### The Social Construction of a New Political Actor: Nongovernmental Organizations

#### The Origins: Popular Education Centers and the Dictatorship

The first Brazilian nongovernmental organizations, like most southern NGOs, emerged in the 60s from a shift of northern NGOs' funding policies towards indigenous efforts, based on new thinking by Third World intellectuals on development theory and practices, and from the influence of Liberation Theology, both of which emphasized the need to work from the ground up. The removal or resignation of professionals from the public sector after government policy changes by authoritarian governments, also played a part (Caroll 1992; Clark 1991; Landim 1993a). However, these groups did not call themselves NGOs at the time; they were known as popular education centers (*centros de educação popular*) of variants thereof. Neither did they assume the advocacy role that we now associate with NGOs. Advocacy was hardly a choice with a repressive, conservative regime.

First, it is worth noting that aid to the third world transferred through American, Canadian and European nongovernmental agencies increased by 68% between 1960-1980 (Landim 1993a:13). An increasingly sizable portion of these moneys come from governmental subsidies (through the European Economic Community or the OECD for example) to Northern nongovernmental organizations such as Oxfam (ibid). In 1990,

according to UNDP data, NGO transfers from the north to the south represented the equivalent of 13% of official governmental aid (Fernandes 1994:83). In 1995, about 25% of US foreign aid was channeled through NGOs (Gordenker & Weiss 1996:25).

In the 60s, the Northern NGOs which financed Latin American organizations were largely linked to churches,<sup>1</sup> mostly European at that point, and had developed a critical view of their governments' international policies (Landim 1993a:211). This encouraged them to finance groups with similar ideas to their own in countries of the South. Latin American political exiles participated in European NGOs, and hence altered the way these organizations saw Latin American reality and what their action should be (Landim 1993a; Doimo 1994:5).

Meanwhile, in Brazil, criticism was mounting against community development practices which evolved in the 50s/60s from US positivist sociology. Or rather, the need was felt for a politicization of these practices, unveiling the class and power relations at the root of community problems (Landim 1993a:235). Paulo Freire's methodology for adult education and literacy provided essential additional ideological and methodological support for these popular education centers which were later to become NGOs (Doimo 1994:5).

With the beginning of the crisis of Marxism, especially in its 'democratic centralist' form and discovering Gramsci in the 70s, Latin American intellectuals started to value micro-transformations in daily spaces and interpersonal relations (Doimo 1994:5). The dictatorship period fostered the implementation of these ideas since any highly visible political work would have been prohibited: leftists worked at micro-level transformations, often under the protective arm of the Catholic Church.

In fact, members of the progressive Catholic Church, and to a lesser extent other churches, were paramount in the creation of the first centers for popular education, which defined themselves entirely as support organizations for localized popular movements. They provided support for popular movements (*assessoria aos movimentos populares*) (Landim 1993a, Doimo 1994). The term *assessoria* (support), although widely used, is itself ambiguous and defines more a type of relationship than a particular activity. It is "related to the transmission of some sort of competence and knowledge which involves mutual trust and some degree of affinity of goals" (Fernandes & Carneiro 1991:8). According to Fernandes & Carneiro's survey (1991:6), as many as 60 percent of NGO leaders in Brazil identify themselves with Liberation Theology and the Church's pastorals. In the 70s, Marxists, whose parties were illegal, increasingly joined these centers in order to be able to do some sort of political work. Whereas they intensified the politicization of the community work done by the centers, they learned from progressive Christians how to put Marxism into practice in community work (Landim 1993a). One of the feminists who later founded SOS-Corpo, and who had been a member of one of these centers in Recife told Leilah Landim:

I already had Marxism. But the method, the focus on process and on the popular sectors as subjects of their history, this I learnt with them (the Jesuits of CEAS in Pernambuco). The refined translation of Marxism to its practice, of how to translate it into a method....In terms of intervention I learned a lot. (quoted in Landim 1993a:262).

From Liberation Theology and community development, the centers and then NGOs inherited their participatory ethos (Landim 1993a:193). From Liberation Theology, they also inherited the anti-intellectualism, rejection of market principles, and emphasis on direct

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<sup>1</sup> Still in 1991, 70% of the Brazilian NGOs interviewed in Fernandes & Carneiro's survey were financed principally by church-linked agencies (Fernandes & Carneiro 1991).



democracy which are constitutive of the political culture of Christian Base Communities (Fernandes 1994:40).

A strong sentiment against anything institutional or centralizing was the fruit of the influence of progressive Catholicism, as well as of self-criticism on the Left. Like social and popular movements, NGOs believed in "*o povo como sujeito de sua própria história*" (Doimo 1994:7). Autonomy and direct democracy were the ethical and political principles that guided them (ibid:7). NGOs thus became markedly anti-assistencialist and strengthened their identity in opposition to traditional philanthropic enterprises (Landim 1993a).

At that stage, NGOs, like social and popular movements, did not trust traditional forms of political representation (Doimo 1994:13), much less the State and other institutions such as universities. Yet, since the beginning, NGOs have always had a modernizing project. In Leilah Landim's words:

There is a modernizing project, in the sense that they take to popular groups the underlying assumptions of universalistic rationalism, the logic of equality, autonomy, individualism, participation, dialogue -- of citizenship. (Landim 1993a:219)

### NGOs in the Time of Democratization: Building Civil Society

Originally, popular education centers considered their role to be to facilitate the emergence of and to support popular movements. As time passed by, the movements became a reality and the political scene in Brazil changed with the return of formal democracy in the mid-80s. This allowed proponents of social change to have a more public, visible role.

NGOs emerged as a political and social actor with a voice of its own. As Leilah Landim (1993a) brilliantly demonstrated, the "centers" redefined who they were and what

their role was through coming together in new arenas such as national associations/fora (one of the most recent is the Brazilian Association of NGOs (ABONG) created in 1992), or regional networks. Financing agencies also facilitated the emergence of an NGO identity by bringing their 'partners' from the South into contact with one another.

However, this process has been slow and contested, since not all centers which give *assessoria* (support) agreed with the redefinition of their role, even if they have taken on the NGO label. The fact that a host of new entities, with varied origins and goals, including people coming from universities, governmental organizations and activist circles jumped on the band-wagon and created their own NGO might have helped in the redefinition of the pioneering organizations: 60 percent of ABONG members were legally founded after 1985 (44.1 percent between 1985-1989) (Landim 1996a:XI).

In the new context of Brazilian formal democracy, NGOs, as well as other groups within civil society, softened their stance against institutionality and started working within the realm of institutional politics (Doimo 1994, Scherer-Warren 1994). The process that led to the 1988 constitution in which numerous organized constituencies participated certainly intensified this dynamic. In this new political and economic context, NGOs have seen their role no longer so much as a support for popular movements, but rather as builders of "civil society" in their struggle for citizenship (*a luta pela cidadania*) along with popular and social movements. Again, they are claiming their own voice.

The phrase "civil society" itself has a long history with changing meanings (Scherer-Warren 1994). I will restrict my overview to the concept of civil society as it is used in recent years in the context of social movement research. Civil society has been defined in two different ways, either in opposition to the State alone, or as a third sector, in opposition

to both the State and the Market (Scherer-Warren 1994). According to the first school, civil society represents all forms of mobilization, organization and association outside of state institutions. The second trend considers civil society to be not only nongovernmental, but also nonprofit; i.e. it does not obey the laws of the market system (ibid). Among the latter, some scholars consider the third sector to refer to all voluntary/philanthropic nongovernmental, nonprofit organized endeavors, while the term "civil society" is restricted to those endeavors that struggle for citizenship and democratization. Other scholars, the most prominent of which is Alan Wolfe, do not distinguish between the third sector and civil society, in which they include all forms of mutual help, solidary actions at the community and the family level (ibid). Landim (1993b) has shown that philanthropy and NGOs do share some common ground, although NGOs in their attempt to create their own identity have rejected traditional philanthropy. However, the dimension of working for others, of the public good and altruism are very present in the work of both.<sup>2</sup>

The new emphasis on "building civil society," rather than "strengthening popular movements," is part of the positive, less anti-institutional stance of NGOs in the new political context (Doimo 1994:17). Landim also noted that NGOs are dropping the term "popular" from their names and activities and wonders whether it is the result of the general pull towards liberalism (1993a:359).

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<sup>2</sup> The best example of how struggle for citizenship and more emergency-oriented philanthropy can be linked is the Campaign against Hunger and for Citizenship (*Campanha contra a fome e para a cidadania*) launched by the Rio-based NGO, IBASE. This campaign responds to the immediate need to satisfy the need of the hungry but is set within the larger framework of a struggle for citizenship for all, in that it aims to conscientize both individual donors and recipients on the structural causes of poverty and hunger (Landim 1993b; Scherer-Warren 1994).

We can say that Brazilian NGOs have multiplied in the 80s due to (1) the expansion of international financial and political cooperation; (2) the emphasis on privatization by neoliberal governments, kicked off by Reagan's speech "the magic of the market" delivered at the North-South conference in Cancún in 1981 (Escobar 1995:93). This resulted in a move away from the financing of government efforts towards the financing of the private sector by multilateral agencies; (3) the internal redefinition of their political role by proponents of social change in response to changing political circumstances in democratizing Brazil; Other factors that need to be taken into account are (4) the return of exiles; and (5) the economic crisis which left numerous middle-class professionals with limited job options.

"NGOs? What Kind of Beast is This?"<sup>3</sup>.  
NGOs Born Out of a Social Movement

Although the term "Non-Governmental Organization" was coined by the United Nations in the 40s to designate groups which could serve as consultants, the classificatory term "NGO" has been used only recently to identify support/advocacy organizations. This new label and its associated roles did not come into vogue for no reason. As Gordenker and Weiss (1996) have pointed out changes in the international political scene, as well as new communication technologies, have increased the role sectors of civil society could play in the policy-formulation process. The term NGO was also imported into Latin America via financing agencies to designate the intermediary organizations which implement their projects with grassroots organizations (Scherer-Warren 1994:8). This is yet another example

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<sup>3</sup> In Portuguese: "*Ongs? Que Bicho É Esse?*"

of how Northern institutions have retained the power to name and hence partly to define reality in this part of the world.

In Brazil, it was the United Nations conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro and commonly known as Eco-92, which brought the term NGO into public purview, through the media (Landim 1993a; Scherer-Warren 1994:8). This shows once again the importance of the international dimension for these transnational actors. The acronym NGO became ubiquitous and it has acquired an increasingly positive symbolic value, despite some gross misrepresentations in the media. It is "in" to be an NGO. However, the definition of an NGO circulating in the sectors involved, as well as in the larger public, is far from precise because it spans widely differing realities.<sup>4</sup>

I will start with the definition of the Brazilian Association of NGOs, ABONG, which have been involved in the construction of NGOs as a new political actor. The association defines an NGO as "a nonprofit entity whose fundamental objective is to develop a democratic society, that is, a society based on democratic values: freedom, equality, diversity, participation and solidarity" (da Souza 1995: 3). The association had 210 NGO members as of January 1995.

With regard to its membership criteria, ABONG's monthly newsletter, *o Jornal da ABONG* announces that "the association welcomes organizations which 1) are autonomous from the State, churches, political parties and social movements [my emphasis]; 2) are committed to the building of a democratic society, which includes respect for diversity and pluralism; 3) have a public character in terms of the actions they are involved in; 4) are

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<sup>4</sup> For typologies of NGOs see: from an international politics point of view Gordenker and Weiss (1996) and from an international development aid perspective Carroll (1992).

recognized as a legal entity ("*tem personalidade jurídica própria*") with nonprofit motives; 5) can justify at least 2 years of experience" (Jornal da ABONG, January 9, 1995, p. 2).

These membership criteria reinforce the idea that NGOs are defined mainly in opposition to other institutions. They are nonprofit and they are nongovernmental. They also distinguish themselves from traditional philanthropic institutions and their assistentialism. These criteria do not mention the privileged relations of NGOs to popular movements but strictly draw the line between NGOs and social movements, reflecting the changing relations of NGOs with popular movements.

ABONG's criteria are quite specific. However, the acronym NGO "carries the trademark of polysemy and therefore of the possibility of differentiated use by various groups" (*traz a marca da polissemia e portanto da possibilidade do uso diferenciado por grupos diversos*) (Landim 1993a:61), which means that different groups will use it with different meanings in different circumstances. I agree with Landim (1993a:296) that this is in part due to the fact that the boundaries of the NGO social field with adjacent fields are not well-defined, so that groups play with their identity according to the context. Feminist NGOs are a case in point, as the introductory quotes to this section hint at. Of particular interest to me is the boundary between women's NGOs and the women's movement. I will now sketch the story of the women's movement in Brazil and the emergence of these professionalized entities within it.

### The Story of the Brazilian Women's Movement

The Brazilian women's movement, like other women's movements in Latin America, reflects the great diversity of the country in terms of race, class, sexual orientation,

generation and regional origin. It has brought together self-declared feminists, originally mostly well-educated, white middle class women adopting a long range strategy focusing on gender equality, and women who do not refer to themselves as feminists, from the poor and working class, who organized around family and community survival issues or in urban and rural trade unions, etc. The boundaries between feminism and other components of the women's movement are not clear-cut as some of the issues dealt with by "non-feminist" neighborhood women, such as contraception and child care, already addressed gender inequality (Radcliffe and Westwood 1993). Moreover, Amrita Basu (1995) warns us not to limit our reading of feminism to its middle class Western expression, or to fail to recognize it when women for one reason or another refute the label but not the ideas or the practices. The distinction has become even more blurred as a number of women from all walks of life have started to acknowledge their feminist identity, oftentimes radically redefining what it entails (Alvarez 1994; Soares et al. 1995). Overcoming the theoretical notion of a "unitary woman" has started to become, although still timidly, a practical reality for Brazilian feminism. It has 'gone plural' as Sonia Alvarez (1998a) cogently puts it.

Starting from the beginning, some two decades ago, the story of the Brazilian women's movement and its different components would run as follows:

By the late 70s it had become evident that the Brazilian military regime had failed to transform the "economic miracle" into a reality for all Brazilians (Fishlow 1989). Grassroots organizations and popular movements sprang up in a collective effort to deal with the increasing difficulties of the working masses and to oppose the repressive regime (Alvarez 1990; Kowarick 1985). By now it has been acknowledged that women represent the majority of participants in many of these grassroots movements not only in Brazil but in

Latin America in general (Caldeira 1990). In Brazil, as throughout Latin America, women organized around their identities as mothers and wives to resist the authoritarian military regimes, with the help of the Catholic Church and leftist-oriented parties (Alvarez 1990; Fisher 1993; Jelin 1990; Safa 1990). Brazilian women have also taken to the streets to defend the well-being of their families as the wage-squeezing development strategy of the military caused a severe decline in purchasing power for the low income strata. In São Paulo city, more than twice as much work was needed in 1974 (end of the Brazilian economic "miracle") than in 1959 to obtain the same basic food basket (Kowarick 1985:77). The situation worsened considerably with the economic crisis of the early 80s when national prices for basic food items increased by 400% (Barroso and Amado 1987:62). The ensuing structural policies (Wirth et al. 1987), and the more recent recession, aggravated after 1989 by the economic adjustment policies of the first elected president, Fernando Collor de Mello, and his successors, have meant further dwindling of public funding, privatization of social programs, and a sharp increase in poverty levels, although paradoxically some social indicators seem to have slightly improved (Faria 1994; IBASE 1991; Lopes 1994). Women have been especially affected by these hardships. As studies have shown, they bore most of the negative consequences of structural adjustment programs which cut public services linked to areas of social reproduction (such as health and education), for which women have traditionally been responsible (Barroso and Amado 1987; Beneria and Feldman 1992; Nash 1990). Health care is a case in point as I will demonstrate later.

The link between the level of hardships endured and the level of mobilization is not a linear one though, as attested by the fact that the level of mobilization today is lower than it used to be, despite continuing and at times worsening conditions. Belief in prospects for



success of collective action and the supporting role of other sectors of civil society, or even of institutions, also play their part.

As for the Brazilian feminist movement, Alvarez (1990) attributes its emergence to the questioning of inequalities experienced on the job by educated, working middle-class women, as well as to the deterioration of their standard of living as a consequence of the economic crisis. Contradictions between the traditional gender ideology of the military regime, which ascribed nurturing roles to women as mothers and wives, and its strong state capitalist development strategy, which prevented women from fulfilling these ascribed roles, fueled the growth of the movement. In addition to these structural conditions, she believes "conjunctural conditions", such as the human rights discourse, the international feminist discourse, especially after the UN -sponsored International Women's Decade from 1975-1985, and the discrimination suffered by women within the sexist and male-dominant political organizations of the Left, have brought crucial ideological and organizational support to the creation of an autonomous feminist movement. The period of liberalization of the military regime after the mid-70s, known as *Abertura*, and the ensuing strengthened hope for successful protest, also favored growth of the feminist movement (Alvarez 1990; Schmink 1981).

Finally, the encroachment of the authoritarian state and the market into the private sphere, which is largely a women's domain, "comprising religion, the family, relations with kinfolk and social dynamics" (Arizpe 1990:xviii), left women "empty-handed [with] few children, small families, fewer social ceremonies and religious rites, highly formalized urban customs and programmed social practices" (ibid:xv). The need arose for women to reconstruct an identity, which middle-class women did in part through their feminist groups.

Women needed to "create a democratic public space for their collective identities and demands" (Cohen 1985:670).

I discussed in Chapter 2 the necessity to intertwine the two main schools of social movement theory because social movements are simultaneously expressions of group identity and conflicts of interest, and because these two dimensions impinge on each other. Similarly, we just observed that in the case of the Brazilian women's movement, both new social movement theory and resource mobilization theory are needed to explain its emergence: Fighting for their rights/needs (strategy), helped women to deal with the disruption of women's traditional gender roles and to forge new roles for themselves (identity).

#### Emergence of women's health movement

As I mentioned in my introductory chapter, the Brazilian health care system is highly dichotomized and inequalitarian. Since women in Brazil, as well as globally, are responsible for the care of the sick, the young and the elderly, their burden became heavier as malnutrition (Barroso & Amado 1987), and unsanitary and crowded housing conditions increasingly affected family health. The situation was aggravated by diminishing government investment and further privatization of public services throughout the 80s (Briscoe 1990; Cohn 1994). As a result, low-income women have had to travel longer distances and wait longer to obtain health services of poor quality for themselves or their family. Between 1989 and 1993, federal health expenditures plummeted from 11.3 to 7.5 billion dollars (Berquó 1995:7).

These drastic reductions in public spending coupled with the increasing impoverishment of the population, the failure to implement a universal health care system

and reproductive health programs, neutralized the possible positive impact of the major decline in the fecundity rate, from 5.6 (children per woman) in 1970 to 2.5 in 1991 (*ibid*: 1). Indeed, maternal mortality rates never declined as fast as the fecundity rate, and were stable at 134.7 per 1,000 live births in 1988 (*ibid*:19-20). Many of these deaths could be easily prevented but even in São Paulo city, one of the most privileged areas in the country, low-income women visit an average of three hospitals before they can find a maternity bed (*ibid*:14).

In other words, the fact that women have less children did not liberate more resources for those who do, or for other women's health issues. Brazilian women have less children partly as a result of the high sterilization rate. Lack of information about or availability of other contraception methods<sup>5</sup> is leaving women with little choice, and sterilization is increasingly common, including among young women and especially among poor women. Further, due to racial inequality in living standards, and to at times barely veiled racist leanings on the part of public authorities, a disproportionate number of Afro-Brazilian women are being sterilized. This, of course, has been an important struggle for Afro-Brazilian women's groups (Roland and Carneiro 1990:208).

Extremely high rates of cesarean sections, and reproductive tract cancers, which are responsible for 30% of all total cancer deaths in Brazil are other reproductive health problems faced by Brazilian women (Berquó 1995:23). Again, many such deaths are easily

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<sup>5</sup> The oral contraceptive is the other widely used contraception method in Brazil. In São Paulo, it is slightly more common than sterilization (respectively 38.6% and 36.1% of women who use contraception in 1992). In the Northeast of the country these figures are reversed (62.9% for sterilization and 23.0% for the pill) (Berquó, 1995:9). High-dose pills are still common. Pills are relatively expensive but since they are available over-the-counter many women self-prescribe, which leads to serious side-effects, such as strokes (see Briscoe 1990:46).

preventable but the rates of pap smear exams for the detection of cervical cancer are very low: even in São Paulo, only 4% of women get a pap smear (ibid:24). Obviously, women's health should not be limited to their reproductive health but it is the area that receives the most attention from the authorities, and the bleak picture provided above gives an idea of how neglected other women's health issues might be.

Given this grim situation of health care for the large majority of Brazilians, and especially for low-income women, it is understandable that people have been organizing to make claims on the State for better services. Women also have searched for ways to make the medical establishment respectful of women's rights and needs and to give women more control over their own bodies and health. This was originally more a concern of middle class feminist groups than of low-income women's groups, whose priority was to obtain health posts and hospitals in their neighborhoods.

At the federal level, pressure from feminist activists led to the elaboration of PAISM, the "Integrated Women's Health Program," which was proposed in 1984 by the Ministry of Health and started to be implemented by the social security agencies, in 1986, after alterations in response to feminist demands. The objectives of PAISM are to guarantee women's access to care and to address all their health needs in the various phases of their life, with an emphasis on prenatal, birth and puerperium complications, prevention of cancers of the reproductive tract, clinical gynecological attendance, improvement of breast-feeding, control of sexually transmitted diseases, and education on conception and contraception. PAISM aims at organizing and updating the equipment of health services, at providing professional training, and women's education. Unfortunately, it is being implemented only slowly (Teles 1993: 150-152).

Feminist groups have been working with low-income women in health movements, offering them ideological and logistical support. The nature of this relationship has been changing as some feminist organizations have professionalized. This trend is part of the larger phenomenon of emergence of NGOs in the South as described in the first part of this chapter.

#### Transition politics: A taste of the institutional arena

Social movements are not born in a vacuum but are embedded in their cultural and political matrix. Just as institutions such as the Catholic Church and leftist political parties played a role in the emergence of women's movements, the movements changed under the new political circumstances of the period of transition from authoritarian to democratic rule in the mid-80s. Channels of expression were reopened and repression was no longer to be feared. At the same time, the movements' rejection of institutionality gradually weakened. For feminists, as for other groups in organized society, this meant the possibility to take a more visible role in the public arena, as I have described earlier for NGOs. Advocacy became a possibility. Feminists increased their presence in political parties, which rendered political platforms more gender-sensitive and when parties came into power, translated into new institutions to monitor the implementation of these policies, such as the São Paulo *Conselho Estadual da Condição Feminina* (CECF) or State Council on Women's Condition, the first of its kind in the country, created in 1983. Two years later, when José Sarney took office as the first civilian president in more than 20 years, the *Conselho Nacional dos Direitos da Mulher* (CNDM) or National Council for Women's Rights was instituted at the federal level.

These Councils had significant participation of feminists with strong ties to women's groups and thanks to their positioning within the State, enabled undeniable advances which the movement would not have been able to secure on its own, such as a commission on reproductive rights within the São Paulo Ministry of Health, or the *Delegacia da Mulher* (DDM), the special women's police stations (Nelson 1996). In part, the Councils' success was a result of the pressure enacted by feminists outside the State which strengthened the councils' position vis-à-vis the government and helped to limit co-optation (See Alvarez 1994: 37-44 for more on the creation, achievements and limitations of these councils).

As the political scene consolidated in this new democratic phase, and as more conservative governments took power, in 1986 in the State of São Paulo and in 1989 at the federal level (administration of F. Collor de Mello), the Councils turned into partisan puppets with limited ties to the women's movement and strongly reduced political clout within the government. In 1995, the São Paulo CECF was moved away from the city's main commercial artery to a building in the run-down inner-city. It has been hampered by political partisanship (Nelson 1997, chapter 2).

Another crucial experience with state institutions for feminists was in the Workers' Party (PT) municipal administrations –The PT was born in the late 70s from the processes of organization of popular movements, unions, and organic intellectuals, and shared their ideals of direct, participatory democracy. Some PT feminists, including five who are members of the groups I worked with, participated in Luiza Erundina's PT government after she was elected mayor of São Paulo city in 1989. They were members of the *Coordenadoria Especial da Mulher*, an institution designed as an "explicitly executive organ" whose employees would formulate and follow policies (Alvarez 1994:45). Although the

*Coordenadoria* and women's issues were not given as much attention as they deserved by the government, it did obtain notable successes, such as the abortion services delivered at the Jabaquara Municipal Hospital for women victims of rape, incest or in cases of life-threatening pregnancies. These are the three situations in which abortion is legal in Brazil. This service remained up to the end of my fieldwork the only one of its kind in Latin America. Similar services were instituted in Brasília and in Recife in 1996 (*Red de Salud de las Mujeres Latinoamericanas y del Caribe* 1996).

What is essential in our NGO/professionalization story is that working within these councils and other state organs provided experience to some women who were then ready to create their own organization when a conservative government came back into office. This was true for former council members: in 1990 the former President of the CNDM cofounded CEPIA (Citizenship, Studies, Research, Information and Action) an NGO located in Rio de Janeiro. Several women former members of the CNDM created, in Brasília, an NGO (CFEMEA) which has specialized in monitoring and pressuring the Brazilian Congress on gender-related legislation in 1989. In São Paulo, Geledés - Instituto da Mulher Negra, one of the first black feminist NGOs in Brazil, was born after several of its members left the Black women's commission of CECF or the CNDM, and rather than going back to work in their original state agencies for a conservative municipal government where they would have been constrained, decided to create their own organization.

#### The "Takeover" by Issue-Specific Groups and Networks

The first Brazilian feminist groups were multipurpose (Costa 1987), mainly *grupos de reflexão* (consciousness-raising groups) addressing issues as they appeared and focusing

in large part on the experience of their own members. Issue-specific organizations appeared in the early 1980s. Alvarez recounts that the São Paulo statewide feminist meeting held in Valinhos in 1980 marked a watershed in this regard, as feminists started dealing in particular with domestic violence, reproductive rights and the feminist alternative press (Alvarez 1994:32). These issue-focused organizations seemed to have weathered better the increasing political divisions along party lines which appeared with the return to democracy (Alvarez 1994:35).

This shift to issue-specific organizations has been neither a uniform nor a smooth process. Some old time feminists who are not interested in engaging in institutionalized feminism complained about the fact that the movement had abandoned self-reflexive activities, which are still very much needed in their view. Some of them have recently formed a group called *Verde Lilás*, which is meant to function along the lines of the old formula. Nevertheless, at the time I interviewed one of its members, the group wished to give special attention to issues related to women and the environment, as its name indicates (green lilac). Hence, they were already going for some level of specialization.

One volunteer group, the *União de Mulheres do Município de São Paulo*, makes a point of not specializing on one issue but instead works on all issues relevant to women.

One of its leaders wrote:

The women's question -a macroproblem to be resolved- will not find a solution in a fragmented manner, which is one of the characteristics of academic disciplines and governmental policies. It cannot be dealt with as a mere technical problem or by specializing in this or that issue. (Teles 1993:129)

The group is indeed open to any issue. Still, issues of violence against women are their forte.



In part as a result of this contested process of specialization and professionalization, the groups involved in the São Paulo women's health movement present varying degrees of specialization and of professionalization, as well as formalization. The most formalized groups tend to be the most specialized and the most professionalized.

### Organizational diversity

Today, the women's health movement in São Paulo is characterized not only by regional/geographical diversity but also by a high degree of organizational diversity. Organizational forms range from informal networks of neighborhood women to professionalized organizations (NGOs). Hence, the level of formalization, institutionalization and professionalization of the groups vary widely.

I found loosely structured, informal groups such as women organizing a pharmacy for disadvantaged communities, women participating in a course on health with a women's health component, or women from local Mothers' Clubs mobilizing whenever they deem necessary. These groups do not consider themselves feminists although they work with women's issues and share many feminist ideas. The Catholic Church's Christian Base Communities (CEBs) or its pastoral commission for health are at the root of each of these organizing efforts.

By now there are also a number of neighborhood women's groups focusing on health (six out of the 11 I visited) in which at least some members identify themselves as feminists. Some of them are fairly informal, others are more formal, some represent an effort by feminist organizations to bring together the leadership of various groups of a region. Two popular groups who acknowledge their feminist identity, are now well-established, receiving some international funding which allows them to rent or buy their own space, where they

offer workshops either in practical skills or in consciousness-raising. They are not professionalized in the sense that their members are not permanently employed by the organization, although some members receive compensation fees (*ajuda de custo*). The ideological and logistical support these groups have received from feminist organizations has been essential, in some cases although not in all, in getting them to focus specifically on women's issues, and in some cases even to exist as entity. Most of these neighborhood women were originally active in Church linked organizations.

São Paulo also hosts two federations of women's groups dealing with various gender issues, not limited to health. Both consist of an active, centrally-located group, which brings together the leadership, and of various groups in the periphery of the capital, and in one case in the entire state of São Paulo. These two federations are/were linked to the Communist Party of Brazil (PC do B). One of them was expelled from the party five years ago. Neither one is interested in professionalizing, although the issue creates tensions among members in one of them.

Finally, one finds feminist academics, or former public health care or social workers, most of which with an activist background, organized in professionalized nonprofit organizations (i.e. NGOs) and one semi-professionalized organization. They conduct research, documentation, and training, and publish written and audio-visual support materials on gender and health issues; provide gynecological, juridical or psychological services; influence national and international policies regarding women's health; and provide support to local women's movements.

## Networks

Ten of the 18 groups I visited during the first phase of my research, those that considered themselves feminists and which had a minimum of formalization, had been participating in an innovative organizational form, a national network, called *Rede Nacional Feminista de Saúde e Direitos Reprodutivos* (National Feminist Network for Health and Reproductive Rights) hereafter called *Rede*.

Networking designates the "nonpermanent collaboration between various organizations on political issues of joint interest" (Uvin and Miller 1996:349). Faxes, e-mail and other information and communication technologies have facilitated the emergence of such organizational forms. In Brazil, the realization of the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 was a catalyzing factor for the creation of some NGO federative aggregations, such as ABONG and the Brazilian Forum of NGOs (*Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs*).

As Ilse Scherer-Warren (1994:11) puts it, these networks mostly reflect the readiness on the part of NGOs to accept and promote the collaboration of heterogeneous sectors of civil society in a given political action. This is a departure from the premium put on the unity of a central oppositional actor in earlier leftist ideologies. I would argue, in the case of the *Rede*, that class and racial heterogeneity have been achieved to a certain extent, but this diversity has created new challenges, which we will examine in Chapter 6.

Networking is seen as one of the strategies NGOs can use to "scale-up" politically, i.e. "to engage in a conscious strategy to interact with the State so as to address state-level dimensions of local problems. This involves developing strategies to go from the micro to

the macro-level with the objective to bring about governmental policy change" (Uvin and Miller 1996:349). I shall show how it applies to the National Feminist Network for Health and Reproductive Rights.

The *Rede* was created in August 1991. According to its own definition it "unites 70 groups and independent activists whose political and professional work focuses on women's health and reproductive rights. This work has two main thrusts: the concept of reproductive rights within the framework of human rights; and the recovery of PAISM (Integrated Women's Health Program) as a reference to improve public health services."<sup>6</sup> Members of the *Rede* are women's groups, NGOs, women's studies centers in universities and research institutions, as well as health professionals. Its declared objectives are "to organize the women's health movement around a joint action proposal which guarantees space for feminist ideas within the context of the new world order; and to maximize the potential level of influence of the feminist/women's movement in the design of public and social health policies, at the national, state and municipal levels." It focuses its activities on political networking at the local, national and international levels, to monitor the elaboration of health policies; on participation in State health councils and women's health commissions; on promotion and/or participation in seminars, debates and courses in the field of health and reproductive rights; on organization of public campaigns (AIDS, abortion, maternal mortality, etc.); on media interventions; and on production and exchange of information between members of the *Rede*, and with sympathizers of the feminist and other social movements, intellectuals, the governmental sphere and the press.

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<sup>6</sup> This definition as well as most of the following information about the *Rede* was obtained from a presentation pamphlet distributed at the III national meeting of the *Rede*, held in Rio de Janeiro in April 1995.

The *Rede* is composed of a Council of Directors, an Executive Secretariat, and a General Assembly. The first two are responsible for the coordination of the Network, and hold periodic meetings to define action proposals. The Executive Secretariat is rotated among member organizations. In 1995, it was passed from SOS-Corpo, located in Recife in the Northeast of the country, to the Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde located in São Paulo. It is responsible for the Rede's newsletter, the *Jornal da Rede*, which is published every four months, and for writing proposals to obtain funding for the functioning of the Network. One problem raised at the second *Rede*'s meeting in October 1994 was that the Executive Secretariat does not possess the infrastructure to accomplish these tasks. Indeed, the Executive Secretariat, apart from some moneys dedicated to communication expenses, relies on the infrastructure of the host organization for its daily functioning. The Assembly defines the broad lines which direct the work of the Coordination. It elects the Executive Secretariat as well as the regional representatives which form the Council. The *Rede* works through thematic commissions which focus on four basic themes: maternal mortality, pregnancy and childbirth; HIV-AIDS; maternity and gender; and communication.

The São Paulo chapter of the *Rede* is strong and influential, capitalizing on the long history of the feminist movement in that region and on the political clout of its participants at the national and international level. The *Rede* is a member of the *Rede de Saúde das Mulheres Latino-Americanas e do Caribe* which performs similar tasks at the level of the subcontinent. Further specialization is occurring as a few groups working with women and AIDS have been trying to set up a network of organizations working on such issues, although with little success by the end of my fieldwork.

For Alvarez (1994:53) "these more fluid forms and forums of feminist organizing and the articulation of a multiplicity of feminist transformational projects in the 1990s appeared to be replacing the more formalistic and tension-ridden movement coordinations of the First and Second Paulista Women's Congresses." However, these networks are not free of tensions or power struggles. This is because their Executive Secretariat and regional representatives do provide a sanctioning of power differentials among groups and in turn endow those chosen for these positions with prestige and symbolic capital, as we will discuss in upcoming chapters.

### The origins of feminist professionalized organizations, aka NGOs

By the mid-80s, some feminist organizations had achieved a degree of specialization, on health issues or domestic violence issues, to name the two major poles of interest. Yet, there was no talk of NGOs. By 1993 however, 17 feminist organizations nationwide were members of ABONG, hence defining themselves, at least in some sense, as NGOs<sup>7</sup> (Landim 1996a). The majority were created after 1985 (11 out of 17) (See Table 3-1).

The historical overview of the women's movement hinted at some elements that participated in the process of emergence of feminist NGOs. We know that the emergence of feminist NGOs was made possible by the new political context of formal democratization, as well as by the "absorption," albeit limited, of feminist ideas by the State (as Sonia Alvarez (1996) labels the process of recognition of the "women's question"), and by the international

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<sup>7</sup> In 1993, 42 percent of ABONG members declared that gender issues were among their top five priorities. However, gender or rather, women, constitute the top priority for only 14 percent of ABONG members (Landim 1996a:xvi).

development apparatus (Escobar 1995:177 ff.). The latter made funding available for women's projects. This led to the creation of jobs around such issues.

Table 3-1: Characteristics of feminist NGOs members of ABONG

Name of NGO	Date of creation*	Size of staff	1993 budget in US\$	Number of volunteers
CACES	1988	12	50,000-100,000	1
Casa da Mulher do Nordeste	1980	8	-50,000	1 int'l /2 nat'l
Casa de Passagem	1989	43	300,000-400,000	1int'l /16 nat'l
CEMINA	1990	8	50,000-100,000	0
Centro das Mulheres do Cabo	1984	50	Not available	0
CEPIA	1990	16	500,000-1,000,000	0
CFEMIA	1992	12	100,000-200,000	0
CFSS	1985	11	100,000-200,000	0
Comulher	1985	3	50,000-100,000	2
CURUMIN	1989	5	-50,000	0
ECOS	1990	12	100,000-200,000	0
GELEDÉS - Instituto da Mulher Negra	1988	38	300,000-400,000	Not available
Movto Mulheres do Campo/da Cidade	1978	10	-50,000	5
Rede Mulher	1983	12	100,000-200,000	1 int'l
REDEH	1989	12	100,000-200,000	1 int'l
SOF - Sempreviva Org. Feminista	1963	21	200,000-300,000	0
SOS Corpo	1982	24	300,000-400,000	0

Source: Landim & Cotrim (1996) except for Geledés. Geledés information is based on 1994 interview material.

Note: \* Legal date of creation

On the part of activists, democratization meant a perception of increased possibilities of gains for the movement in the institutional sphere of politics. I show in this study that increased involvement with the national and international political system required a more formalized structure, which pushed towards professionalization (a process similar to that discussed by Staggenborg (1988) in the case of the US pro-choice movement). Formalization and professionalization were also a result of being legally and administratively able to obtain and manage donor funding as we will see in chapter 8.

Other elements have also contributed to the professionalization of feminist organizations in the mid to late 80s. One was a severe, protracted economic crisis which

prevented middle class women from engaging in activism while holding one or two jobs to make ends meet. This was compounded by the desire for a more stable, less energy-sapping mode of activism on the part of the cohort who started it all in the mid 70s, and last but not least, a strong desire from feminist activists to integrate feminism into their every-day lives through their jobs (Lebon 1993).

Let's take a brief look at some cases of São Paulo's feminist NGOs. In one case, a group of about 25 members got together in the early 80s, originally meant to be multipurpose, although with an emphasis on health and sexuality. A few years later, with a much reduced crew, it specialized as a women's clinic; it adapted to Brazilian reality the model of a European clinic a leading member of the group had visited. A second group has a history which follows more closely the model of development NGOs. It was originally a family planning clinic, with paternalistic undertones (*assistencialista*), then became politicized with the participation of left-wing activists in the 70s offering support to organizing activities among low-income population, especially the health movement, as well as services to this population. It finally turned into a feminist support organization in the mid-80s, as it focused on organizing women as such. No need to say there was considerable personnel turnover between these different phases of its life-cycle. Another NGO was the result, in the early 90s, of feminist academic activists looking for more flexibility and more liberty in their work. Yet another NGO was born of the Afro-Brazilian women's movement and the experience these women gained in the councils and their lack of desire to work as public workers for the ultraconservative Paulo Maluf. These cases confirm the processes described earlier in more general terms, namely, the specialization of feminist consciousness-raising groups, the politicization of development NGOs working with local



communities, the influence of prior political experience within state institutions, as well as more personal motivations for the creation of feminist NGOs.

### Feminist NGOs: A Contested Definition

No doubt the emergence of NGOs signified a new form of activism within the feminist movement, bringing to the fore new challenges. Rather than to rely on a standard review of the literature on NGOs to discuss problematic areas in their activities, I want to show how these coalesce with points of contestation in the definition of NGOs among activists, a bit in the manner of an ethnopolitics of NGOs. Indeed, conflicting definitions of NGOs are circulating among the different groups I worked with. The need is felt on the part of volunteer activists to sharpen and delineate better the contour of what an NGO actually is: "NGOs! What kind of animal is this? We've got to find out" a neighborhood activist said during a plenary meeting for the preparation of the Beijing conference. An NGO feminist responded jokingly: "it bites!"

The points of contestation in the definition of NGOs among activists correspond to problematic issues raised in the academic literature, and also reflect foci of tensions between professionalized and volunteer groups. These contested areas are the issues of funding, and of relationships to the women's movement and to the State.

### Funding as a Defining Criterion? Are Aid Agencies Straight-Jacketing NGOs?

Within the context of the women's movement (or of other social movements for that matter), a simple definition of an NGO might be any movement organization which receives funding and is able to offer a salary to its members. To what extent should receipt of funding

be a defining criterion of NGOs? One professionalized group challenged me to broaden my definition of NGOs to any group receiving funding, not to restrict it to those whose members are remunerated. On the other hand, volunteer support groups, including the only one in São Paulo which does not receive any international cooperation funding, believe that it is not receiving funding in itself which distinguishes NGOs from an organization of the social movement. Rather, the fact that NGOs are dependent on this funding for their members' subsistence and hence for their organizational survival sets them apart. As Fúlvia, member of a volunteer group, put it:

We made this political evaluation since the beginning and we decided that our organizations should not become classic NGOs, [...] I mean, we can obtain funding, as a social movement organization, from whomever we want, but we do not live from this money, we do not need this financing to exist.

In her opinion, some NGOs would simply close their doors if their financing sources dried up. Similarly but casting a more favorable light on funded and remunerated activism, a feminist NGO which is a member of ABONG explained to a grassroots women's group that NGOs are *profissionais militantes* (activist professionals). This was also the term suggested to me by a member of a volunteer organization who also works in an NGO. According to ABONG's definition, receiving funding is not a defining characteristic of NGOs.

This fuzziness as to where to draw the line (at the receipt of funding or at the remuneration of members) in the definition of an NGO is a source of tension, as most volunteer groups believe that professionalized groups are somewhat coopted by financing agencies, while professionalized groups see this critique as being hypocritical since most volunteer groups also receive some money from donor agencies, as I was explicitly told by a rather irritated NGO leader.

Concerns with the impact of donor agencies are not unjustified. They reflect the issue of social control through patronage discussed in chapter 2, as well as some of the critiques addressed by scholars of NGOs: in the 1980s, NGOs were perceived as a panacea for development by bilateral and multilateral development agencies, as they wished to avoid working with governments which often were inefficient, but also because of the neoliberal bent of these institutions. Through their financing, northern bilateral and multilateral aid agencies are increasingly shaping the NGO community and NGO objectives. Yet, most NGOs do not question their dependency on donor funding (Landim 1988; Moura 1994) since it might threaten organizational survival.

This statement must be nuanced as Landim (1993a) argues: in the 80s, there was an increasing amount of discussion with donors about NGO dependency. Direct financing of southern NGOs in Latin America by multilateral and governmental donors is classified as "very important" by only 11.7% of NGOs according to a survey conducted by Fernandes and Carneiro (1991: 12). Still caution is needed on the part of NGOs as such financing is likely to become much more important as northern nongovernmental donors are turning away from Latin America to other regions of the globe. Finally, even nongovernmental donor agencies have their agenda and procedural requirements which influence funded organizations as I will discuss in Chapter 8.

### Relationship to the Movement

For members of two NGOs I interviewed, NGOs are simply part of the women's movement. For some, as the first quote at the beginning of this chapter suggests, they *are* the movement, and marking the difference between the two is artificial. This point of view

might well be that of United Nations officials as well, since the parallel fora accompanying the UN women's conferences refer to NGOs and not to social movements. In the case of Beijing it was the "NGO forum on women." This might partly explain the popularity of the acronym NGO and why one grassroots group I visited made a point of being considered an NGO, although they are not professionalized and their characteristics correspond more to those of a neighborhood women's organization.

The view shared by the staff of a third NGO, who is active in ABONG and espouses its definition, is that they are clearly separate from the popular movements they support. However, they consider themselves part of the feminist movement and of the larger women's movement.

For most volunteer women, as exemplified by the second quote given at the beginning of this section, NGOs are constitutive of the movement. But they are different from classical social movement organizations. This difference lies largely in the practices of these entities: Fúlvia, the activist quoted earlier continued:

The groups to which I belong are not NGOs according to a political definition. They are social movement organizations. [...] Either in the black movement or in the feminist movement (I belong to both), they are social movement organizations, with a body of affiliates, who decides who is going to lead, who is not going to lead, who decides as well whether we need to look for funding or not, what are our principles in this story. I mean, it is not the Board of Directors who decide these things, it is the General Assembly of our organization. I mean, everybody rules, isn't it?... What's the basic difference between an NGO, in Brazil, and a social movement organization? It is that, in the end, in the very end, an NGO is a micro or a medium-sized firm. It has a boss.

Emphasizing again the difference between NGOs and social movement organizations she said: So they are are not NGOs, they are social movement organizations, which work essentially with discourses, with consciousness-raising, we do not have any service delivery apart from our discourse, no? Solidarity is our political option

What Fúlvia is pointing at is the issue of social control over NGOs' work. Others have linked it to the accountability of NGOs to financing agencies. Implicit in Fúlvia's tirade is also the issue of the internal dynamics of NGOs, which are different from those of other social movement organizations, and she argues less democratic in terms of decision-making. It echoes Carroll's distinction between grassroots support organizations and grassroots membership organizations (1992). I will examine issues of internal dynamics in Chapter 4.

### An Hybrid Identity

Let's come back to the issue of polysemy which the "NGO" label entails. Important feminist NGOs, such as SOS-Corpo, SOF, IDAC, Rede Mulher, are members of ABONG. SOS-Corpo and IDAC are members of its board of directors. SOF and Rede Mulher are members of the São Paulo NGO Forum (*Fórum Paulista de ONGs*). In a perfect example of this polisemy, leaders of two of these organizations told me there is no difference between NGOs and social movements. Yet, they belong to an association which defines its members as not being from social movements.

In another example, Leilah Landim recounts that "groups dealing with race or women's issues were present at the Global Forum of UNCED in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 as 'social movement' with chosen representatives who formed collectives of the organizations related to that theme. In other contexts these organizations commonly would have used the classification NGO" (Landim 1993a:72). In a third example, a participant of the national network of feminist health organizations proclaimed that "It was us, women, who raised the question of new values, of sexuality, first as an organized movement, then as women's

NGOs" (RNFSDR 1994:14). But in their 1995 presentation folder the network is presented as "a political articulation of the women's movement in Brazil" (*uma articulação do movimento de mulheres do Brasil*) which is constituted of women's groups and NGOs etc. Similarly, their membership criterion is that members can be "autonomous groups", or university women's studies centers, or individuals (RNFSDR 1994:43). In the words of Fúlvia: "NGOs are strongly hybrid. I don't know if it is only here in Brazil, but they have a serious identity problem. They have to assume that they are professionals of feminism or of the Black movement. Do you understand?"

I would argue that there is a great degree of indeterminacy in what is an NGO, and multiple -including contradictory- uses of the term by activists and others involved. However, I also believe that feminist NGOs do have a hybrid identity, as movement organizations but with organizational features and other characteristics that brings them closer to pressure groups and other mainstream organizations. Finally, I would argue that there is a certain degree of "manipulation" of this hybrid identity, manipulation which is not necessarily explicit or even conscious, to serve different purposes.

First, it is my understanding that members from NGOs born from within a social movement, such as the women's movement or the Black movement, share the same identity, as women or as Afro-Brazilians, with volunteer participants of the movement despite differences of class or race, etc. In the case of the feminist NGOs I worked with, most participants, although to a lesser degree for younger members, were volunteer activists before professionalizing.

Moreover, NGO members are active as movement participants in movement-wide activities, such as the Beijing preparation, although they tended to reduce their involvement

in the preparation for street activities such as International Women's Day demonstrations. In fact, when these professionalized groups work at the national and international levels, they are more akin to a social movement organization in the sense that they work for themselves as women, although their tactics are often those of a lobby working at modifying the legislation etc., rather than the disruptive tactics usually associated with social movements.

At the local level, they do little demand-making with municipal authorities, at least in São Paulo and are closer to NGOs as defined by ABONG: They work as advocacy groups or doing research on issues related to women. This element is becoming increasingly important in their agenda. And they work as support organizations for neighborhood women's groups in the capacity of a professional organization, with a possibility of career-building (work for other women). In this capacity they are closer to development organizations. However, their methodology is a mix of the consciousness-raising activities of popular/social movements and the more technical methodologies of participatory research and development. The mix also varies from one NGO to the next depending on their political stance.

This is how I would describe NGOs activities, which confirm a hybrid identity. Now, the way feminist NGOs define themselves in different contexts is another matter altogether. Indeed, I believe that in situations where it is more politically advantageous for them to play the card of competence, professionalism and expertise, they tend to identify and present themselves as "NGOs". This is a plus when funding opportunities are involved. Similarly, when they need to engage in collective action with other NGOs, such as in ABONG, either to get donors to redefine funding policies, or the State to modify their legal status or to lessen bureaucratic hassles, or to face an hostile press, they will also present

themselves as NGOs. It is understandable. This is also the case when they want to press an issue at the national level, not necessarily linked to women's issues, but in conjunction with other progressive NGOs who are their legitimate allies.

On the other hand, when feminist NGOs see it as politically advantageous to present a mobilized and unified women's front to apply pressure and shore up their legitimacy in certain forums, such as at UNCED or at the parallel fora of UN women's conferences, they present themselves as part of the women's movement. For example, documents prepared for the Beijing Women's conference<sup>8</sup> seem to deliberately ignore or minimize the role of NGOs: The Declaration of Brazilian women for the 4th World Conference on Women (*Declaração das Mulheres Brasileiras para a IV Conferência Mundial das Mulheres*) uses the phrase "the Brazilian women's movement has been organizing nationally..." ("*o movimento de mulheres no Brasil vem se organizando nacionalmente ...*"), while the synthesis of the Brazilian women's document talks about "women's organizations" and emphasizes the organizational diversity of those involved in the articulation:

We involved women's groups with a clear feminist orientation or not, feminist NGOs, NGOs who work principally with women, or not, women's groups active in trade-unions, professional or neighborhood associations, political parties, churches, academic centers, besides other organizations of civil society. (*Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras* 1995:2)

This synthesis also emphasizes the volunteer character of the process: "yes, our journey to China, with all its activities, is an irrefutable proof of one and a half years of work by women, stealing hours here and there" (*ibid*:3). This emphasis on the movement rather than on professionalized activism is likely to also be the result of the pressure by volunteer

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<sup>8</sup> I am referring to documents elaborated by the movement, not to those elaborated by feminist academics for the Brazilian government for the official conference.



groups to be included in the preparation process for Beijing as I will recount in more detail in Chapter 7.

One serious area of tension arising in part from the blurriness of the boundary between social movements and NGOs, and from the fact that NGOs at times are perceived as representatives of the movement, is the issue of their representativity at the national and international level. This issue will also be dealt with in Chapter 7. To complicate matters further, there is a definite resistance, although it is subsiding, on the part of most feminist NGO members to acknowledge their status as professional feminists. Fúlvia, the astute volunteer activist I quoted earlier, put it this way:

They have to assume that they are professionals of feminism or of the black movement, right? Why should the feminist profession remain clandestine? It's great! It should not remain in clandestinity. A feminist professional, what's shameful about this? I think we need a lot of professionals, as they are called, but these women should not be ashamed of it!

What this activist sensed is related to the original anti-institutional, anti-market political culture of social movements which puts a premium on "pure" activism and might even inflict guilt on NGO members.

#### Relation to the State and the Development Apparatus: "From Subversion to Subvention" ?

Relations with the State constitute a third area of contestation in the definition of NGOs. Among volunteer activists, there is a lingering feeling that NGOs not only are being manipulated by international agencies, but also are more apt to negotiate a consensus with the authorities, and more readily coopted. Not all non-NGO members think this way. Indeed, Fúlvia said to me: "I don't think that because you are an NGO means that you stop being progressive (*"avançado"*), that you stop contributing to the movement" However, it is the opinion of most volunteer women I interviewed. In a striking example of this perspective

one long-time volunteer feminist defined NGOs by their political selling-out to the State and the development apparatus. Another volunteer feminist told me she had a feminist friend, whom she did not name but who worked in a feminist NGO, and who had confided to her that for her, NGOs represented a shift of the movement "from subversion to subvention."

Again, some of these critiques from within the women's movement echo the criticism leveled at NGOs in general in the academic literature. Critics have claimed that NGOs' performance has been overstated and that they are becoming part of the "pact of domination", along with states, global development agencies, and private firms, thus compromising their social change potential (Clark 1991; Everett 1989; Helzner and Shepard 1990; Hulme & Edwards 1997).

Brazilian NGOs, including the women's health NGOs I worked with, have at least one foot in the development arena, if only for the very fact that their donors are part and parcel of that establishment, although with varying degrees. Hence, some of the recent poststructuralist critiques of development apply to NGOs as well. Yet NGOs, due to their hybrid nature, can also be part of the solution articulated by these critics.

These critics examine development as a Western cultural construct, originally a result of the Cold War (Escobar 1995) or going even further back (Agrawal 1996). This construct and the discourse that accompany it were designed in part to ensure that "third world" countries would not fall in the sphere of influence of the USSR. It rests upon the belief in progress, in a rather linear fashion, on the virtues of economic growth to bring this progress to different parts of the world and on the logic of the State as a legitimate actor to stage "interventions" in the "social world" (Escobar 1995).

For our purposes, an important element of the poststructuralist critique of development is the charge that it depoliticizes the problems of poverty by making them appear to be economic and technical, pushing into the background the issues of unequal distribution of resources from which these "problems" stem (Escobar 1995:142-145). As a result, development has been called "the anti-politics machine" (Ferguson 1994). Escobar writes "development fostered a way of conceiving of social life as a technical problem, as a matter of rational decision and management to be entrusted to that group of people - the development professionals - whose specialized knowledge allegedly qualified them for the task" (1995:52). These professionals and the institutions to which they belong have created "clients" out of third world people, dividing them in a series of categories, such as peasants or the poor, and have set up structured agendas and bureaucracies. They have developed a field of expert knowledge (Escobar 1995).

In the case of women, there has been an institutionalization and bureaucratization of feminist knowledge, in particular of the Women In Development or WID approach. It is recognized that the WID approach has been accepted by the development apparatus in part because it shares many of its assumptions. In particular, it advocates for the mainstreaming and integration of women in development efforts, arguing that development will be more efficient if women's productive roles are taken into account (Kabeer 1994:4-27). The limitations of this approach have been discussed thoroughly by Kabeer (1994).

The NGOs I worked with do not necessarily share a WID view. In general, they adopt a more structuralist approach, which may find its origins in the Marxist-oriented groups in which most feminist activists were first politically active. The equity/empowerment argument is important to them. However, as an Afro-Brazilian

feminist activist from a volunteer organization claimed "NGOs have bureaucratized activism". There is no doubt that professionalized feminist groups have facilitated the translation of social movement knowledge (including feminist and popular movement methodologies) into expert knowledge. To quote Escobar again: "the concept of professionalization refers mainly to the process that brings the third world into the politics of expert knowledge and Western science in general" (1995:45). This knowledge now has a price since some feminist activists work as consultants, including for other women's groups.

At the same time, there is no doubt that the feminist movement and other movements (such as the environmental movement or popular movements) have influenced development practices. However, what was an exercise in consciousness-raising with social movement activists runs the risk of becoming a "training" workshop with development experts, thus with the potential to shade off the collective and political roots of participants' problems.

Long-time insider observer of NGOs Leilah Landim (1993a) argues that the tension between the political and the professional/technical aspects of the work of NGOs has always existed since their inception, because NGOs were born out of the willingness to bring together different political positions and the position of progressive religious people (1993:253). Kabeer (1994:12) warns us not to equate the technical with the non-ideological or non-political, though. What is technical may seem non-ideological because it rests on and does not question the cultural premises of the dominant discourse, in this case, of the development establishment and of Western culture and science in general. In Bourdieu's terminology, it follows the orthodoxic order.

As I mentioned earlier, the primary institutional link between NGOs and the development establishment are financing agencies. Clark (1991) argues that as national and international development agencies from the north increasingly are funding NGOs, the less radical among the latter have been tailoring their programs to the directives of the former, thus reflecting the donors' mainstream ideology and methodology. This argument is worthy of interest, considering the "proliferation" of NGOs which in the 80s and 90s were founded in part by "economically displaced" professionals who lost their jobs with State agencies due to structural adjustment programs, and found an alternative for employment in the funding available for NGOs (Bebbington et al 1993:45). These more opportunistic, less radical NGOs might be less questioning of financing agencies' projects (in Bebbington's case, of the State) because they need to secure an income rather than to struggle for social change. Public opinion is aware of the existence of these opportunistic NGOs, which undermines the legitimacy of all NGOs (ibid:56). The tension between the political and the technical side of NGO work which was present in older, more radical NGOs might tilt in favor of the technical with these newer, more opportunistic organizations.

The World Bank and other multilateral and bilateral agencies have started to finance NGOs because they recognize their efficiency and legitimacy with the population, but also because they want to entrust them with some of the compensatory funds, known as social investment funds,<sup>9</sup> they believe should off-set the damage caused by structural adjustment programs, and relieve the potential for protest (Bebbington et al 1993:50). For example, the World Bank, a leader in development project financing, called its strategy for the nineties

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<sup>9</sup> See chapter 7, "relations with the State," for a discussion of social investment funds, in particular in Brazil, where they have been less prominent than in other parts of Latin America.

"market friendly development". This strategy was considered by Arturo Escobar as "the final crystallization of the return of neoliberalism" (1995:93). Some Latin American NGOs have refused this type of financing as this would constitute an endorsement of structural adjustment programs in their eyes (Bebbington et al 1993:51).

Bebbington argues that the positive side of this situation is that whenever NGOs have accepted these projects, they have had a say in how public money was allocated (ibid:51). It is positive if we consider that NGOs' criteria for spending money are closer to the interests of the people than are the criteria of the State. Although this is true for the large majority of NGOs in Latin America where States tend to be corrupt and to favor the elite, and definitely so for the NGOs I worked with, the fact remains that there is no social control over NGO spending. Whereas, in theory, a democratically elected government is subject to such control.

Despite the controversial issues raised in this chapter, a balanced picture of the NGO world is needed, in particular of their relationship with the grassroots. NGOs still represent some of the most promising attempts at democratizing development, to use Clark's phrase, especially when they work with and/or foster local groups and are aware of the implications of their institutional links to the development establishment. These groups can contribute to providing the spaces needed for alternatives to development suggested by Escobar (1995): He emphasizes the role that local organizing in the South should play in the future of their own societies by allowing people to define their own needs and strategies as they negotiate/resist cultural and economic domination by the North. Similarly, Kabeer argues for the need to come up with "transitional strategies" before we get to "our final vision of a society organized on feminist principles" (1994:67). To do so, we should take advantage of

the contradictions present in the development establishment because the latter does not represent a monolithic set of interests. I see politically aware NGOs as part of such an intermediate strategy. The ideal set-up for social change is that of a two-pronged strategy with women activists both within and without the development arena, just as Sonia Alvarez (1990) argued in the case of the State. All activists involved need to be wary not to tilt to balance too far in the direction of those within. This tends to happen because those closer to the power holders have more resources and power as I will discuss in the coming chapters.

### The Women's Movement as Social Movement Field

At this point, I want to reengage our theoretical discussion begun in chapter 2 on the nature of social movements and the place of organizations within them. The concept of social movement field is particularly well-suited with regard to the women's movement, because of its diversity, not only in terms of class, race, ethnicity or sexual preference, but also in organizational terms and in terms of preferred political strategy.

A glimpse of the National Conference of Brazilian Women in Preparation for Beijing held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1995 gives an idea of how diverse the movement has become<sup>10</sup> and the problems this engenders when trying to reach consensus. The conference itself was a showcase of diversity indeed. Women from the entire country, some of which made the long journey by bus to Rio, from the rubber-tapping areas of the Amazon, rural workers from Paraná in the South, and Piauí in the North, domestic workers, academics,

trade-unionists, members of the federal congress, along with members of women's organizations of all kinds, and the newly appointed president of the recently revived CNDM, Rosiska Darcy de Oliveira, were present at the conference. However, a number of professionalized feminists, key figures of the São Paulo women's health movement, were notably absent.

A Black feminist trade-unionist from São Paulo was pleased with the diversity of the conference. She said: "the articulations worked well, the articulation of indigenous women, women with disabilities, black women, everybody.... It was a very rich process. I think it is productive." Similarly, the evaluation of the conference by Matilde Ribeiro, professionalized feminist and leader in the Black women's movement, is that Afro-Brazilian women were "now not only present at the meetings in order to denounce the absence of their issues on the agenda, but participating in the elaboration [of the Declaration of Brazilian Women], ensuring visibility of the race issue" (Ribeiro 1995:455-456). One of the few indigenous women activists present, whom I interviewed, said: "we don't discriminate, if it is a prostitute, a domestic worker, an Indian woman, a black woman, a lesbian, a feminist." Indeed, prostitutes were present for the first time at a national women's movement event. This of course does not mean that all troubles of integrating feminisms are over, but it is a serious step forward.

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<sup>10</sup> The strengthening of popular, afro-brazilian and lesbian feminisms in Brazil have been noted and commented upon by scholars and activists alike (Alvarez 1994; Soares et al. 1995). For the history of the Black Women's Movement see Geledes (1993) and Ribeiro (1995), and the limitations of the inclusion of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous women in the feminist movement see also Guilherme (1993) and CIM (1994). For popular feminism Citeli (1994) and lesbian feminism see Coletivo de Feministas Lésbicas (1994).



The document which resulted from this conference, the Declaration of Brazilian women for the 4th World Conference on Women, shows that diversity, including organizational forms, is indeed highly praised. The third paragraph of the document reads:

This [preparation] process was remarkable for its respect of diversities and for its multiplicity of organizational forms, a proof of the women's movement's richness. We come from different regions, race/ethnic groups, ages; we have different sexual preferences, physical and mental characteristics, religious and party allegiances, which express our cultural and social differences. (text approved at the Conference plenary session on 16 June 1995)

I understand NGOs and volunteer organizational forms as another dimension of this diversity. Starting from an understanding of social movement fields as heterogeneous webs of interconnected organizations, or associations of individuals who share a set of political and ethical ideas, I consider, like most activists I worked with, that feminist NGOs are part of the feminist movement. Women's NGOs represent the most institutionalized pole of the movement. They represent the advocacy-centered, reformist part of the women's movement, which works increasingly within the mainstream political arena at the national and international level, often using the strategies of a lobbying group.

What are the consequences for democratization and gendered social change of Brazilian society of this new form of activism? What does it mean for the internal dynamics and the search for a new sociability of movement organizations? How does it affect the movement's capacity to strengthen the voice of less privileged Brazilians? To what degree will the movement be channeled by elite financing agencies? These will be the questions examined in the rest of this work.

## CHAPTER 4

### FACING THE DREAM OF "SISTERHOOD" AND THE PRAGMATICS OF GETTING THINGS DONE

In terms of the organization of our work, I think that this was the greatest change. I think that this idea, this ideology that we had to create an organization, a collective, where everybody does everything, from sweeping the floor, emptying the toilet waste basket, these things that we did in the beginning..., I think that we realized that in practice we had to make some choices. And this is how different roles began to take shape. Although I think that this has always been a source of collective anxiety for us. But I think that we are trying, in this collective process, to do this differently [from the way it is done in the larger society]. I don't know up to what point we are able to create an alternative organization since in fact, we are prisoners of a particular structure [Rachel, professionalized feminist, F&S]

#### Introduction

In Brazil, as in the United States, the feminist ideology of the 70s /early 80s carried strong egalitarian tones, "emphasizing social relations based on equality, women's autonomy, self-help, and collective action. [It] stressed equality in all phases of the organization's operation -decision-making; the division of labor, and access to knowledge, wages and other rewards. [...] Programs were formulated "by women and for women," manifesting the goal of self-determination by the collective and facilitating control by individual women over their lives." (Morgen 1988:371). These groups search for alternatives to the hierarchical principles which have structured large-scale, complex societies since the neolithic (Boulding 1977:211). They search for a new sociability.

What happens to this ideology and organizational features when they are faced with the pragmatics of project objectives, gender equity bills to pass in Congress, and the reality

of individual differences, beyond race and class, between women in terms of work capacity and availability, language and persuasion skills? This will be the focus of this chapter.

Studies on the US feminist movement have shown that organizational issues matter a great deal to movement activists since they usually consider that their internal structure should be consistent with their ideology and identity. In other words, "ideologies and identities that affirm principles other than self-interest encourage value-rational participants to develop organizations consistent with their beliefs" (Ferree 1992:46-47). This issue is even more relevant if we consider that practices are not simply influenced by ideology, but also do influence a group's collective identity as discussed in chapter 2. Sandra Morgen, for example, demonstrated beautifully how the collective identity of the Women's Health Collective she studied changed as a result of the incorporation in its staff of women of color of working class origin as a result of a federally funded project (1988).

The spotlights are thus now turning onto the four groups I worked with more closely, all of which have a valuable contribution to make to the Brazilian women's health movement. I am focusing on the organization level and I will compare the decision-making process and organizational structure of volunteer and professionalized groups, as well as their membership composition in terms of class and racial identity. I will show the degree to which volunteer groups persist on continuing with a collectivist-democratic and participatory organization, while professionalized organizations experiment, at times with much anxiety, with transparent, formalized, semi-hierarchical forms of organization and introduce some degree of instrumentality in members' relations. They do not, in some cases, such as for their administrative personnel, maintain a feminist identity as essential for participation.

I then look for some of the processes that have pushed NGOs in this direction. These include the difficulties experienced by volunteer groups in maintaining administrative continuity with alternative forms of organizations, such as rotating duties, as well as the need for professional help to ensure proper fulfillment of accounting requirements to donor agencies.

In order to preserve as best I can the anonymity of the groups, and because my interpretation of members' statements and behaviors might not coincide with the way they would like to be portrayed, I will use pseudonyms. I named the two NGOs I worked with most closely Saúde Para Todas (SPT) and Feministas & Saúde (F&S), while the volunteer groups are renamed Casa da Mulher (CM) and Mulheres Unidas (MU). I realize that those who maintain close contact with these groups will be able to identify them. Therefore, I have been careful to mask and change details and situations when my writing could be detrimental to the group.

### Snapshots of Encounters

I will start with two brief sketches, put together on the basis of my fieldnotes and memory, which convey some of the differences in the atmosphere and character of Mulheres Unidas (MU), a volunteer-based group, and Feministas & Saúde (F&S), a professionalized organization: The office of the latter is neat, tidy and welcoming, with rooms and people fulfilling different functions, while the other has ample space for relatively large numbers of people to meet and with relatively unspecific functions, as well as being daring and alternative in its outlook. What I did not see on that first visit was F&S' document center/staff meeting room, as well as the two small rooms where their accountant and secretary work, equipped with another computer, a copy machine and a fax machine.

*I had scheduled a meeting with Alessandra, one of the founders of Mulheres Unidas at 4 p.m. that Friday afternoon. By looking at the map I could tell that the headquarters of Mulheres Unidas were not very far from my apartment in the center of the city. After waiting in vain for the bus I started walking and soon hit an old Italian neighborhood with its small restaurants, specialty shops and bars. Leaving the main street I veered left into a smaller street lined with old houses in a relatively bad state of repair, and then right into a dead-end street with small houses on one side and an abandoned piece of land on the other, where shacks had been built. Mulheres Unidas is the house before last. It is unmistakable with its large outdoor mural of a colorful bunch of women under the motto "10 years of struggle" marking its tenth anniversary. On the house itself, another inscription, more conventional, reads: "Mulheres Unidas, founded in 1981"*

*I got to the rusty gate where I was welcomed by one of the two house dogs. There was no bell to ring, so I shouted. After a few calls, a woman in her late forties came out, wearing flowery leggings, a tee-shirt and a pair of clogs. She introduced herself as Alessandra. I apologized for arriving late as she led me along the narrow walkway which was bordered by more murals, a bench and a tree. The murals depicted various scenes, one related to abortion, another with the motto "Filho não é só da mãe" (children do not belong only to their mother) and a last one with two women kissing.*

*We then entered a small room with a large and low round table in its center. Around the table, which took most of the space, and along the walls, laid a set of low couches with their worn-out, non-matching cushions. These pieces and a small table with a telephone, and another covered with pamphlets and newsletters completed the room's furniture. The walls were lined with feminist posters from various countries, I noted several from*

Germany, and a large bulletin board covered with lists of names, letters and other documents. During the interview I was offered the inevitable *cafézinho*.

After the interview, Alessandra offered to take me on a tour of the premises. We were the only ones there. She showed me an office in the room immediately next door to the room we had been sitting. It had two large desks and several shelves, all covered with papers, books, etc. There was also a large meeting room with benches all around it, where about 40 women could comfortably fit. This room, just as all the rooms I had visited, had been named after a woman who had disappeared during the military dictatorship. Alessandra then took me upstairs to show me their documentation center. A computer, brand new, was sitting on a desk, along with a printer. Behind it, shelves and a large filing cabinet contained a multitude of books and documents. After the visit she saw me to the door and I departed.

An encounter of a different kind: I took the bus to the "Largo da Vitória" terminal, where streets were bustling with popular music, innumerable 'camelots' or street-vendors, selling anything from shoe-strings or small radios to locally-produced cheese. Walking away from this busy square, I took a right on a quiet street lined with simple but well-kept houses. Young trees had been planted on the sidewalk. Feministas & Saúde was at number 110, in one of these simple but well-kept houses. It was largely masked by a large, solid garage door. A small white and blue metallic plate announced the presence of this women's organization: "Feministas e Saúde". I pushed the button on the intercom and a voice invited me to introduce myself, which I did saying that I had an appointment with Rosemeire. This appointment had been arranged by telephone a few days earlier. A

moment later, a young woman unlocked the door to let me in, revealing a tidy little rose garden and lawn area in front of the house. She led me inside the house, through a rather large entry hall and into what looked like a waiting room. There she invited me to have a seat in one of the two comfortable, coordinated sofas. There were framed pictures of famous women artists, such as Frida Kahlo and Camille Claudel, on the wall. A thick carpet covered the wooden floor. Sunlight flooded the room from a large glass sliding-door. On a small set of shelves were displayed a few videos and books; there was also a bottle of mineral water and some plastic glasses. Next to the shelves a TV and VCR. Brazilian popular music was playing softly on a portable mini-stereo system.

From where I was sitting I could observe the hallway which had been transformed into a reception area where the young woman who had come to the door was working. She was sitting behind a desk installed at an angle on which sat a large agenda and a telephone. Behind her sat a computer and printer. Across from her there was a set of filing cabinets, and on the wall a few framed posters, one from a campaign for legal abortion, and from the Casa de Passagem, another women's group in the Northeast of the country. A few minutes later, another young woman appeared at the door and called my name. After greeting me and introducing herself, she led me up the wooden staircase into what is usually used as a gynecological consultation room. I noticed another consultation room, and an office with three individual desks. Rosemeire was wearing a pair of blue jeans and a striped tee-shirt under a vest. After the interview Rosemeire took me downstairs to their kitchen where she offered me...a 'cafezinho'. Stepping into the kitchen was like entering backstage. Two women were there chatting in the sunlit room, furnished with a stove, fridge, round table and two chairs. After the cafezinho, during which we

*exchanged small talk, Rosemeire said good-bye and went upstairs while the secretary took me back to the front door.*

### Democratization and NGOs' Internal Dynamics

The decision-making process seems like a logical place to start when discussing egalitarian social relations within an organization. As the following section shows, volunteer groups in principle are more democratic internally and are subjected to a greater degree of social control. However, in practice the difference is not as great, as far as the technical staff of NGOs go, because certain characteristics of informal organizations --which volunteer groups tend to be-- also hinder democratic governance. On the other hand, other elements of NGO practices such as the hierarchization of their membership between technical and administrative staff, as well as their necessarily more exclusive membership in terms of formal education, and therefore class, are challenges to their internal democracy.

Before getting into decision-making processes per se, I want to comment on the information flow in both types of organizations. There are fewer information gatekeepers in volunteer organizations. The best example of this is MU where a small agenda is kept where everyday happenings are recorded, in order for anybody to update themselves with what is going on. This is the "talking agenda". Two books are kept in which all minutes of meetings are taken as well as other important information. These two notebooks are available to all members of the organization for consultation. The bulletin board plays an active and central role in disseminating information about upcoming activities. Members also sign up on the posted lists to participate in given activities. The weekly meetings also play a vital role in



the life of the group. They have been held at the same time and the same place every week for a number of years now and are open to anybody interested.

In all three other organizations, including the Casa, there is no such talking agenda and the bulletin board does not serve such an important function. It serves mainly as an informative tool to announce outside events organized by other organizations, conferences, etc. In both NGOs it is located in common areas (hallway or kitchen) that are not working areas, whereas at MU it is in the meeting room. In the case of the Casa, the small size of the core group may explain why the bulletin board is used in a way more similar to those of NGOs than to volunteer groups.

A bulletin board is likely not to be an appropriate internal communication tool for NGOs, due to role specialization of their staff members, which I will discuss later in this chapter, and to the different nature of their activities, which rarely require the whole staff to participate. Communication in NGOs seemed to take place within dyads or small groups of staff members related to a particular project. In fact, one member of F&S told me, when I commented on the small number of team meetings they were having, that they did not need as many team meetings because they see each other every day and are able to use these more informal channels of communication with each other, rather than hold a meeting. They used to meet every 15 days but, for example, they did not meet between August 15 and September 19. In other words, their team meetings are more sporadic than for a volunteer group such as MU for whom meetings are one of the pillars of their organizational structure. Unlike the meetings of volunteer organizations, the team meetings of both NGOs are not open to anyone interested. Permission must be granted to participate.

### Social Control: General Assemblies and Boards of Directors

A major difference between professionalized and volunteer feminist organizations is that, at least in principle, in volunteer groups, the general lines of work are defined by the general assembly of their members (*assembléia geral*), who also elects the members of the Board of Directors (*Diretoria*) who are in charge. This is the case at MU and at the Casa. The only restriction for any member on her right to vote or to be voted to the Board of Directors is a minimum period of participation (for example 3 months for Casa da Mulher). In both organizations, the Board of Directors is elected for two years and the General Assembly is to meet every year. The last General Assembly held at that point by MU had gathered 60 women.

On the other hand, F&S's General Assembly is restricted to "active members who fulfill specific tasks for the development of the organization" (F&S statute). This assembly used to elect the *Diretoria* whose members were in fact the F&S staff members. In 1992, the statutes were modified and now state that the Board of Directors, whose members are the staff members, will remain in charge indefinitely (*fica em prazo indeterminado o mandato desta diretoria*). This alteration reflects the changes in the nature of F&S, from a women's group at the very beginning, with a larger number of participants, not all of which were staff members, to a clinic/advocacy group with a professionalized staff.

The hybrid nature of SPT is reflected in its statutory organizational structure. SPT has a General Assembly, which according to the 1994 statutes constitute -as in the case of MU and the Casa- the highest instance of the organization. In earlier statutes, beneficiaries were clearly included in the assembly general. The 1994 statutes, although they do not exclude their participation, are not as open. It states that those "who participate actively and

have affinities with the work of SPT" can participate in the General Assembly. The General Assembly elects the Board of Directors who are not, as in the case of F&S, the staff members themselves, but are chosen among former staff members, beneficiaries and other interested individuals. The Board of Directors meets with some staff members every month and is then to approve the work done.

In practice, the difference between F&S and the other groups is not as great as it might seem. During its history, SPT has experienced traumatic changes of Board of Directors, which meant significant changes for the political line of the organization. But today, SPT's Board of Directors signs the staff's reports and has little influence on its work. They still need to sign the budget and approve purchases/sales of equipment so that they have some potential power. Recently, the SPT staff has made efforts to inform the Board better so that they have more input in the life of the organization. For example, a seminar was organized for members of the Board to learn more about the organization.

As for both volunteer groups, the same core group of activists usually remains at the forefront of the organization and makes decisions. Even if an influential member does not have a seat on the Board of Directors for a particular term, she remains influential, since the statutes are seen as a formality. Nevertheless, the possibility of being voted out is very real and general assemblies also give an opportunity for other members to voice their opinion. There was no General Assembly at MU, the Casa or SPT from February until November 1995, so that I could not witness the dynamics of such a meeting (These assemblies are held every other year at MU, and once a year at The Casa). However, a member of another volunteer women's organization, which functions on a similar model, recalls what happened at their last assembly:

So, we have general assemblies with about 200 women, and during the last assembly for example, there were women who were against abortion. Women from the base cannot understand why we discuss abortion, and this woman, she is a UBM member, she organizes women in her neighborhood, etc. So we talked it over, the whole polemic surfaced and we voted. [Sylvia]

NGOs' legitimacy is therefore not backed up by a substantial number of members as is the case of volunteer organizations (MU, for example, has 1,600 women affiliated who receive its newsletter and about 60 of whom came to its 1994 General Assembly. In comparison, F&S's technical team is 7 member strong). This issue of lack of "social control" is a recurrent criticism leveled at NGOs, which they take seriously at least at the level of ABONG. Carroll's distinction between support and membership organizations is useful here, although, as we will see, the label of "support" group is becoming a stretch of NGOs' actual activities.

### Internal Dynamics: The Challenges of Participatory Democracy

All four groups are proponents of internal participatory democracy. Most members, in both types of organizations, usually declare that the statutes are not important, that the positions attributed to individuals by the statutes are merely a necessary formality but that, within the group, in principle, all participate in the decision-making.

In both volunteer and professionalized groups one can find strong leadership by one or two individuals. And in both types of groups I heard complaints about the authoritarianism of the leader(s) in comments such as "the frontline is close minded" (in a volunteer group) or "we [some members] said that we thought that there should be a decentralization of [decisions and a clarification of] the subtle way in which decisions are said to be made by the team. We would need more...I don't know... in some fundametal cases I think that decisions should still be made by the team" (in an NGO).

Indeed there are constraints on democratic decision-making in both types of groups, but these constraints are of different kinds: In volunteer groups, with little definition or specialization of tasks, where tasks and responsibilities are not clearly attributed, some individuals feel and are overburdened, as was the case in MU. At times, they try to entice others to participate more by complaining about how much they are doing and how much there is to do. The others resent this tactic. At the same time, those who are more engaged in the activities necessarily do more of the decision-making. Clarisse, a leading member, reported that some members had accused the leaders of purposefully keeping things disorganized to keep their hold on the organization. She felt "*magoada*" (hurt) by these accusations, although she is aware of the disorganization problem. Tatiana reported that she had finally come to accept the idea that she did have more power in the organization than many. Both anecdotes hint at the strong collectivist and participatory ethic the group is still striving for, as well as the difficulties in achieving this ideal.

In fact, this situation brings dissatisfaction on both sides because the leaders expressed their needs to obtain the "*respaldo*" or support from the others in decisions they have to make at outside meetings. But there is not enough time to discuss all of these issues during the weekly meeting so that they end up making a decision as an individual and not as a member of the group (although group decision-making is important to them). From what I could see, the other members of the group generally agreed with the position taken by the individual member. From the point of view of relative newcomers or those who have a different idea on how to do things, there is a "*maioria*" (majority) which is already constituted and of which they are not part, so that they have a hard time bringing their points across.

Another frustration comes from the fact that decisions are made but are not followed through. Alessandra complained:

I hate it when people make a decision and then don't do what has been agreed upon, and here...Gee...I'm tired of seeing this happening. Somebody says she is going to do this...but absolutely nothing happens, do you understand? Because they do more what they feel like on the spur of the moment. [...] So it is really weird, isn't it? working this way. It is way too disorganized.

On the other hand, she says, people do exactly what they want to do "Now, the advantage is that people do exactly what they want and so they do it with more fervor, you know? I think that's true."

As far as the two professionalized groups are concerned, beyond the fact that the clerical/administrative staff does not participate in the decision-making, which we will discuss later, there is also a more formal acknowledgment of power differentials. The coordinator, in the case of SPT, has more power to take decisions. There is no coordinator at F&S but a clear leadership of Ana Maria, acknowledged by all.

One example of the decision-making power of the coordinator/leader in NGOs was when I asked Rosimeire at F&S whether I could have access to their projects and statutes. She said they had never given them out before and she would have to consult the others. Later, at a meeting, I asked again and Ana Maria, the leader, said, without any discussion with the others that I could make copies of the statutes and justification of the projects. Similarly, I asked two SPT members whether I could participate in one of their meetings. One of them said that I should ask the coordinator, the other said she would have to consult with the others.

I was never told to ask permission from the leader in either CM or MU, which does not mean that they have no power differentials. Rather it is manifested differently as I have

explained in this past section: leaders, who are more engaged in activities, end up making more decisions. Their opinion also carry more weight when decisions are reached collectively, to the point where those with contrary opinions sometimes feel silenced.

It is important to note that at SPT, the group decides who is going to be the coordinator and at F&S there is, as I said, consensus that Ana Maria is the leader. As years go by, though, it becomes increasingly difficult to choose another coordinator as she plays a crucial role in the organization's contacts mainly with financing agencies but also with other institutions. In the case of SPT, this was commented upon by one of the long-time administrative staff. Nara herself acknowledged the "dependency syndrome" between her and SPT during her interview and added that at times she thinks she would have to leave for the organization to consolidate.

The discourse of NGOs in terms of internal dynamics is more pragmatic, less idealistic and tends to be less collectivist than that of volunteer organizations. This tendency is very clear in the case of F&S, where the phrase "false democracy" was used a number of times when referring to the ideal of "everybody does everything," which used to be the norm when the group first formed.

It is still murky for SPT, whose members strongly believe in organization and mobilization and all the collectivist ideals that come with it. Yet SPT is moving towards a more clearly defined NGO organizational model. Four members deplored the current lack of team work in the organization. Nara recalled when they started giving workshops, they used to discuss and exchange a lot when coming back from a workshop about what had happened, what had worked etc. Today, as the complaints from other members indicate, there is less exchange. Different individuals work in different arenas and there are not

enough people, so that they do not have enough time to exchange their experience. Stepping away from a collectivist model, Nara also confided --although this was obviously a difficult and emotional matter to her-- that she was planning on more "*cobrança*" (supervision) of the staff, that she was going to make them feel accountable for their jobs because she felt that some of them were not showing appropriate self-discipline.

On the other hand, the Casa is particularly collectivist in its thinking and working patterns. The whole team participated in the thinking about grants, although one person is more responsible for write-up than others. In part, this is a result of the different skills that different persons were able to bring to the process. In fact, Flora once said to me that she wanted the team to meet more often because she is *encaminhando* (carrying on) too many activities. She wants the others to do more. At MU, all members were invited to meet with a financing agency representative and about half did go. Alessandra emphasized the collectivist character of MU when seeking to distinguish it from the rest of society. "We live in a society which is very destructive, nobody wants to take the initiative to take care of the collective, of a collective cause, you know? It's everyone for oneself. But not us. In that way as well we are different, we do collective work." At another point, when asked why she had participated in the founding of MU, she said "Ah! I have always done collective work, I have never done individual work [...] when I realized that it was more difficult for women [...] then I decided to do collective work, to bring women together. This is why I went for organizing. I have always tried to organize."

To conclude on the decision-making process of NGOs and volunteer organizations, struggle for power is present in both types of groups and there is no conclusive evidence that professionalized organizations are in practice less internally democratic than volunteer



organizations *as far as the technical staff is concerned*. The "tyranny of structurelessness," to use Jo Freeman's phrase (1973) that Sandra of F&S called to my attention, means that power can be manipulated when rules and roles are not well-defined, just as much as when they are formally specified.

However, as I will now discuss, other internal dimensions of the organization need to be taken into account when considering the internal democracy of these groups. Professionalized organizations, because their membership criteria are based on competence and skills, are more homogeneous in terms of members' education and background, thus generally excluding women with little formal education. The difference is not so clear in terms of other factors such as ethnicity/"race," and age. They also exhibit a hierarchization of different types of members (technical versus administrative staff) and a specialization of roles/tasks.

### Professionalization and The Homogenization of Members

#### Education, occupation and income levels

NGO technical staff have a more homogeneous composition of highly educated women, while volunteer organizations have a wider range of participants in terms of education, occupation and income levels. This makes sense since NGOs are oriented specifically towards activities which require more technical knowledge and skills.

As far as education levels go, all but one technical member of both NGOs have university degrees (See table 4-1). Janaina, the only F&S member with no university training, has an unusual life story. She was a member of a neighborhood women's group in the periphery and through the involvement of F&S with this group she was selected early in

the life of the organization to be trained as a paramedic and is now a full-fledged member of F&S. All the credit should be given to her and to the F&S team who believed in her, overcoming the strong class prejudice prevalent in Brazilian society. In terms of occupation, NGO women all have professional activities (See table 4-2).

In contrast, voluntary feminist group members have differentiated levels of education and occupation.<sup>1</sup> While many did go to university, 6 did not, and while many are professionals, one also finds two housewives, a hospital radio operator/standardist, and an unemployed primary school teacher in their midst (See table 4-2).

As far as income level is concerned, it is good to remember that NGO professionals in SPT and F&S accept remuneration well below their level of competence and dedication. Indeed, most of them earn around 1,000 R\$<sup>2</sup> per month (one R\$ (Real) was roughly equivalent to one US dollar while I was in Brazil). The maximum monthly wage I recorded for an NGO professional was R\$ 1,220 (in the NGO --I am not counting other income sources since I do not have sufficient data for this) and the lowest R\$ 850.<sup>3</sup> As is to be expected based on their diverse education levels, wages among volunteer members vary much more widely; the lowest monthly wage I recorded was R\$ 280 for the public health radio operator while the highest was R\$ 2,000 for a medical doctor (See table 4-2). With similar limitations regarding net versus gross income, core women in volunteer

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<sup>1</sup> 23 out of the 30 activists I interviewed were/are currently employed in the public sector.

<sup>2</sup> It is difficult for me to give more accurate numbers because I asked people how much they earned monthly and I realized after the fact that I did not specify net or gross income ('*bruto*' or '*liquido*').

<sup>3</sup> To give an idea of wage scales in Brazil, a nurse I interviewed earns R\$ 900 and another R\$ 1,300, while a pediatrician in the public healthcare system earns about R\$ 2,000 a month. Wages in the public system are also lower than in the private sector.

organizations earn a mean of R\$ 883, which is almost as much as the mean for professionalized feminists. However, beyond looking solely at that average income, it is important to note that women with little education who hold clerical, manual or other unskilled jobs that pay very little are able to participate in volunteer organizations, whereas it would be almost impossible for them at this point to be integrated in the technical staff of an NGO since specific skills are required.

These data thus indicate that women in professionalized organizations have a higher level of education than the members of volunteer organizations. Maybe more importantly they are more homogeneous in terms of occupation and education and income levels as far as their technical staff is concerned.

#### Racial/ethnic identity

Difference in racial composition between NGOs and volunteer support groups is not clearly identifiable since the members of both types of organizations in São Paulo are primarily of European descent, except for one black women's organization. When I asked what they considered their racial identity (*cor*) to be, only 4 out of 30 support group technical staff referred to themselves as "*negra*" (black), 9 as "*morena*", "*parda*" or "*misturada*" (various terms referring to mixed descent) and 16 as "*branca*" (white). One woman considered herself "*amarela*" (Asian) referring to her Japanese father and "Brazilian" mother. All four women referring to themselves as "*negra*" were members of professionalized organizations. The women who identified themselves as being of "mixed descent" were divided almost equally between volunteer and professionalized organizations (see table 4-2).

I am convinced that the discussion of issues of "race" within the women's movement brought a level of racial consciousness which marked the results of this inquiry. It seems that the impact has been larger on professionalized activists than on volunteer activists. Had these women been ordinary citizens, I believe fewer would have referred to their black identity. Still, in one case I expected more acknowledgment of African origins (in a volunteer organization), and in two cases definitely less (both in professionalized organizations). Of course, my own judgment is mainly based on phenotypes,<sup>4</sup> which, despite all its limitations, still has some relevance since it informs discrimination by others.

#### Age: A troubling factor

One intriguing issue is that of the age of the participants. In both types of organizations, the majority of the participants is in their 40s, while only three are younger than 30. Volunteer activists are slightly older than professionalized activists (See tables 4-1 and 4-2). The tendency towards an older participation is even clearer among neighborhood groups. The mean for the 18 women I interviewed was 43.6 (11 are 45 and above). One caveat is that the women I interviewed were usually the leaders so that they might be older than other members since leadership in popular movements tends to be a function of experience.

Some neighborhood women I interviewed said that young women do not have time to participate because they work outside the home, or they work and study at the same time. Two young feminists from the periphery who were starting a university education said they

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<sup>4</sup> I should also add that I was socialized in France, where the rule of hypodescent is not current but, similarly to Latin America, the norm is a multilayered classification based on the way people look.

found it difficult to participate in discussions with old-time, well-known feminists because they felt there was a discourse to be respected. They also felt inhibited by the prestige and by how articulate these women were. Class and cultural differences might have been an important factor in this situation, since these two women hold clerical/odd jobs, live in one of the poorest regions of the city, and are from the North of Brazil. These two women said that a meeting of young feminists had been planned by a women's organization in Santos, a port-city near São Paulo. They mentioned it several times as an important event to them.

The conclusion to be drawn from these data with regard to democratization is that women with lower educational level are generally excluded from professionalized organizations since hiring criteria are based on skills and competence. On the other hand, there are no formal barriers for neighborhood women to participate in volunteer movement organizations, although in practice, there is a certain degree of homogeneity as well. Another major departure from collectivist-democratic ideals among NGOs is the hierarchization of different types of members with differentials in participation and in individual rewards, which I will now discuss.

#### Division of Labor: Technical Team and Administrative Team

NGOs have a much clearer division of labor and specialization of tasks and roles than volunteer movement organizations. At a minimum, all NGOs I visited made the distinction between *administrativos e técnicos*, i.e. between their clerical and professional staff. The terms usually used in the NGO world, including at SPT and F&S, translate from Portuguese as "administrative" and "technical" staff, which connotes the wish to limit the hierarchical distance between the two. Another NGO made a starker distinction between

Table 4-1: Socioeconomic profile: Summary by organization

Organization Name	Total # members	Education level	Occupation	Monthly mean income	"Race"	Age
<b>Feministas &amp; Saúde</b>	7	University: 6 Nonuniv.: 1	Professionals: 7 Other: 0	R\$ 1,065	White: 3 Mixed: 3 Black: 1	40.4
<b>Saúde Para Todas</b>	9	University: 9 Non univ.: 0	Professionals: 9 Other: 0	R\$ 946	White: 4 Mixed: 2 Black: 3	35.8
<b>Casa da Mulher</b>	4	University: 2 Non univ.: 2	Professionals: 2 Other: 2	R\$ 565	White: 4	40
<b>Mulheres Unidas</b>	10	University: 6 Non univ.: 4	Professionals: 7 Other: 3	R\$ 953	White: 5 Mixed: 5	41.2

Note: These data were compiled on the basis of the core group of volunteer groups and the technical staff of NGOs only.

Table 4-2: Socioeconomic Profile and Political Participation of Members (Support Groups)

Organization	Profess./volunteer	Age	Race	Occupation	Wage	Education	Marital status	# of children	Place of origin	Date joined	Political Party
F&S	Adm	33	E	secretary	530	3+	Separ.	3	SP int.	1989	None
F&S	Adm	32	A	financial manager	550	4	Single	0	SP	1988	None
F&S	Adm	34	A	secretary	450	2+	Separ.	2	SP int.	1993	PT
F&S	Prof	46	M	medical doctor	1220	4	Single	0	Bahia	1981	PT
F&S	Prof	40	A	physician assistant	*900	2+	Married	3	Bahia	1985	PT
F&S	Prof	42	E	physician assistant	950	4	Married	2	USA	1985	PT
F&S	Prof	36	M	nutritionist	1,000	4	Cons. union	1	Goiânia	1986	PT*
F&S	Prof	44	E	farmaceutical specialist	1,200	4	Married	2	SP int.	1983	PT*
F&S	Prof	42	E	medical doctor	*700	4	Separ.	3	SP	1994	PC do B
F&S	Prof	33	M	public health med. doctor	*1,120	4	Married	1	Rio	1984	PT*
SPT	Adm	31	E	administrative manager	1,000	4	Cons. union	1	Rio de J.	1993	PT
SPT	Adm	35	E	accountant	852	4	Married	2	SP, int.	1986	None
SPT	Adm	53	A	custodial/receptionist	500	1	Married	7	Alagoas	1980	PT*
SPT	Adm	38	A	librarian	738	4	Single	0	Minas int.	1994	PT
SPT	Prof	31	E	social worker	950	4	Single	0	SP	1989	PT
SPT	Prof	41	A	pedagogue	950	4	Single	0	Minas int.	1989	PT*
SPT	Prof	38	M	journalist	900	4	Single	0	SP	1990	PT*
SPT	Prof	34	A	social worker	1,000	4	Single	0	SP int.	1987	PT*
SPT	Prof	29	A	agronomist	N/A	4	Married	0	SP	1992	PT*
SPT	Prof	36	E	psychologist	1,100	4	Married	2	Minas int.	1986	PT*
SPT	Prof	40	As	psychologist	850	4	Single	0	SP int.	1984	None
SPT	Prof	35	E	social worker	900	4	Married	1	Bahia	1988	PT*
SPT	Prof	39	E	social psychologist	1,000	4	Married	2	SP	1985	PT*
Mulheres Unidas	Vol	49	E	nurse	900	4	Single	1	Minas	1981	PC do B*
Mulheres Unidas	Vol	45	M	psychologist public health	1,500	4	Widow	2	SP int.	1985	None
Mulheres Unidas	Vol	40	M	hospital attendant/radio op.	280	3	Single	0	Bahia	1988	PT
Mulheres Unidas	Vol	32	M	psychologist	N/A	4	Separated	0	SP int.	1994	PC do B*
Mulheres Unidas	Vol	50	E	political advisor (teacher)	700	2	Married	2	Minas	1981	PC do B*
Mulheres Unidas	Vol	42	E	copy editor	800	3	Single	1	SP	1988	PT
Mulheres Unidas	Vol	45	E	medical doctor	2,000	4	Single	0	Paraiiba	1993	None
Mulheres Unidas	Vol	41	M	graphic artist	1,303	4	Single	0	Esp. Santo	1988	None
Mulheres Unidas	Vol	26	E	unemp. elem. sch. teacher	350	3	Single	0	SP	1985	None
Mulheres Unidas	Vol	42	M	student (teacher)	750	4	Divorced	0	SP	1981	PC do B*
Casa da Mulher	Adm/vol	29	M	secretary	300	1+	Married	3	SP	1989	PT
Casa da Mulher	Vol	51	E	housewife/politics/odd jobs	300	2	Legally sep.	4	Piaui	1983	PT*
Casa da Mulher	Vol	31	E	social worker	N/A	4	Single	0	Italy	1993	abroad
Casa da Mulher	Vol	45	E	housewife/seamstress	N/A	3+	Married	2	Piaui	1983	PT
Casa da Mulher	Vol	33	E	pedagogue	830	4	Married	0	SP int.	1988	PT*

Notes: Adm: Administrative staff; Prof: Professional staff; Vol: Volunteer -- Race: A: African descent; M: Mixed descent; E: European descent; As: Asian -- Wage: \* Has another job/source of income -- Education: +: Has completed more than the stipulated level; 1: Elementary; 2: Middle school; 3: High school; 4: University -- Political Party: +: Active militant member; \* Past militant member

their "team in charge", its "assistants" and the "administrative staff" (*a equipe responsável, os assistantes e a equipe administrativa*).

SPT's administrative team totals 6 persons, including an administrative manager, an accountant, a librarian/documentation specialist, a custodial person/receptionist, a cook and a maintenance specialist.<sup>5</sup> F&S has an administrative team of three young women: an accountant, a secretary and a receptionist/secretary. F&S also has a young cleaning woman who comes once a week and the accountant's mother comes in to take care of the garden. A librarian also comes once a week for a few hours to organize their documentation center.<sup>6</sup>

A certain degree of flexibility is definitely present both at SPT and F&S. Members of the technical staff did at one time or another, whenever the administrative personnel was unavailable, fill in for their duties, such as answering the telephone or welcoming people in the headquarters. As NGOs' administrative staff has been reduced due to their recent financial difficulties, the technical staff even get to type their documents on the computer. This is not normally done in Brazil.

Roughly speaking, pay differentials between technical and administrative staff presents a ratio of 2 to 1 at F&S and less than 2 to 1 at SPT, except for their administrative coordinator and their accountant who earn salaries comparable to those of the technical staff (See table 4-2). I am not factoring in the number of hours worked. Administrative personnel has a set 40 hour work-week, while technical staff have an official workload varying from 28 to 32 hours according to the preferences of the individual who is paid accordingly. It is

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<sup>5</sup> I only held informal conversations with Dona Irene, the cook, and Tião, the maintenance specialist.

<sup>6</sup> I did not interview the librarian or any nonpermanent personnel. I knew the librarian, a volunteer feminist, fairly well through her participation in the Beijing preparation process.



difficult to evaluate the real number of hours worked by the technical staff. Some do many more than the number of hours they are supposed to be paid for.

What was the most surprising to me was that, neither at F&S nor at SPT, did the administrative personnel participate in team meetings and the organization's decision-making. This made me aware of my own preconceptions about what a feminist organization should be. Lidia, SPT's administrative manager, said that the team had discussed the fact that she needs to participate in these meetings but this has been difficult due to lack of time. She would still be the only administrative staff to participate.

The advantage of having everybody participating is exemplified by Cecilia, a neighborhood feminist, former SPT staff and hospital (hospital attendant): In the 70s, SPT was an association whose members (*sócias*) were the patients of the clinic. At that time, the administrative staff was supposed to participate in the team meetings of the *funcionários* (employees). Cecilia, who is an active participant in popular health movements, remembered meeting with representatives from financing agencies at that time. She reported having learned her skills for writing project proposals during that time.<sup>7</sup> It is not clear at what stage the incorporation of all personnel in the team meetings ceased.

Despite these limitations to their participation, NGO administrative staff are generally satisfied with their job, judging from their interviews (6 out of 7). In particular, they enjoy the relative autonomy they are granted. However, turnover is high, in part due to the low salary that NGOs can afford to pay their staff. Both F&S and Sande, another feminist NGO, lost valued staff members to a better paid job in the private sector.

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<sup>7</sup> Of course, participatory democracy also has its excesses: Dona Irene, SPT's cook, who has been working for the organization for 17 years (!), told me how she had asked the Executive Secretary of the time not to participate in those boring meetings.

Complaints regarding the "authoritarianism" of the technical staff also motivated at least one resignation.

### Introducing Elements of Instrumentality

#### Role Specialization among NGOs' Technical Staff

Although the clearest cleavage in NGO is between administrative and technical staff, an informal division of labor exists among the members of the technical staff itself. Of course, definition of tasks is clearer among NGO members than among volunteer group members. The difference was particularly striking when I asked members of the volunteer groups what their role was in the organization (See Annex B - description of members' activities). For example, MU members gave me answers such as "I do anything that shows up" or "I've already done a bit of everything [...] I don't have a specific role. It depends on the conjuncture." or "Since I am rather organized, I am stuck with doing the paperwork. It's pretty boring!" ("*Faço tudo que pinta*" or "*já fiz de tudo [...] não tem papel específico. Depende da conjuntura*" or "*Como sou organizadinha, sobra para mim a papelada. É meio chato.*") Only two members reported being "director of the health department" or "in charge of the cultural department" and a third that she was "President pro forma" ("*diretora do departamento da saúde*," "*responsável do departamento cultural*" or "*presidente pro-forma.*")

CM members referred to their role on the statutes with the disclaimer that these are only pro-forma and that they work in a more collective fashion. One member referred to what she is doing in terms of "I have this role of seeing things coming" (*tenho esse papel de*

*ver as coisas acontecendo*), referring to her leading role. Maybe the most expressive example is that of Beatriz, who said

I am the secretary, in terms of bureaucracy, of the Statues of the Casa [...] but we function in a way..., let's say, more collectively. And these roles of secretary general, president, treasurer, this is not the way we work. So here it is more horizontal, we work as a collective. And I am a member of this collective, an active member of this collective, present in the everyday life of the organization from a practical point of view, from the point of view of some contributions, of thinking and such, building and pushing forward the work that the Casa engages in.

I then prompted Beatriz to tell me a bit more about the two projects I knew she was involved with, which are a reproductive rights project with teen-age girls and a project to help women who take care of AIDS patients in their family.

On the other hand, F&S members had no difficulties outlining their activities and roles. They expressed mostly satisfaction with what they were doing. For example, Rachel said:

Well, today I am more involved with research, with two research projects. One on women and AIDS and the other on maternity and work. I mean, these are two very different themes. And I am also in charge of the financial coordination of the organization. Basically that's it.

Hinting at the continuity with volunteer feminist organizations, Marlene prefaced the description of her job with a "I am one of the members of this Collective." Ana Maria, F&S leader, also exclaimed on one of my visits, laughing, "I do everything. I am multipurpose!"

SPT, due to its transitional identity, is in an intermediate position. Five members expressed their discomfort about the indefinition of their roles at least at the beginning of their working for SPT. This was reflected in statements such as "my situation is very undefined," or "it took a while to figure out what my role was," or "in the beginning my tasks were very undefined." This member explained things became easier as her role became clearer.

In my understanding, this indefinition of roles results in part from SPT's desire to remain more responsive to the needs expressed by their constituency (neighborhood groups, popular movements and trade union women's sections) (*responder as demandas*) which means that there is a need for flexibility in what staff members are going to be doing, hence indefinition. Nevertheless, each member was able to name activities which were specifically her domain, as appears clearly in Annex B (Description of members' activities).

It seems more difficult for professionalized activists to accept this indefinition, hence all the dissatisfaction at SPT. At MU, no one complained or seemed uncomfortable with the lack of definitions of her role. This might be due to the fact that, on the whole, volunteer activists spend relatively less time on movement activities. It might also be a result of the concept of "work" and the underlying idea that it has to be structured to be efficient.

Not only are the activities of individual volunteer activists less defined or specific but they are also a lot more varied than those of professionalized activists. They span clerical, administrative, sometimes custodial labor, and substantive work (*conteúdo*), representation in the outside world and work with the grassroots, as well as national or international work. I do not mean to suggest that NGO technical staff members never do clerical labor, such as stuffing envelopes, because they sometimes do. But it happens more seldom. I also do not mean that all volunteer members do absolutely everything. Individual preferences and capacities translate in some differentiation. However, it is not as marked as in NGOs. This is reflected clearly in the weekly planners I asked all NGO technical staff and

volunteer group members to fill.<sup>8</sup> During that week, Flora of CM, among other things, made contacts with two financing agencies and gave an interview about abortion for a TV program, but she also took care of administrative and accounting work for the organization and she gave two "*palestras*" or lectures, one about violence to the local *Movimento dos Sem Terra* (Landless Movement) and one about 'women in society' to the *Movimento de Moradia* (Housing Movement).

At the risk of exaggerating the contrast, Rachel of F&S, that same week, spent almost all her week working on a report for research she had been conducting. That week was not representative of her usual work schedule, although most of her time in the preceding months had been devoted to that research, and reports are due at the end of each research or project. Offering a more representative picture of the degree of variety of work done by F&S technical staff, Rosemeire, that week, worked on three on-going projects which required getting in touch with other feminist activists, participated in the Preparation for Beijing meeting, prepared an invitation for a party celebrating F&S 10th anniversary, worked on a proposal for training sessions on women and AIDS for the progressive PT municipal government in Porto Alegre, received a visitor interested in the work of the organization, as she does every Friday morning, and answered correspondence.

Nevertheless, there is a degree of specialization among NGO technical staff. In both SPT and F&S, no more than two people were involved with the search for funding and

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<sup>8</sup> For the week of October 16 to 22, 1995, a week picked at random, I asked the technical staff of SPT and F&S, as well as the members of CM and MU to fill up a weekly planner with the activities they had engaged in and the number of hours they had spent for each. From the 27 members still participating at that date, I received 15 such planners. Most of those who did not turn it in belong to one of two categories: six are volunteer members who have a moderate to low level of participation, and two are leading NGO figures who are very busy and travel a good deal.

contacts with financing agencies. In both cases, the coordinator or leader of the group was in charge of this task. They both complained that they would like to share this burden but that it was difficult to find members willing to do that kind of work. On the other hand, two members of F&S dedicate almost all their time to the gynecological visits i.e. to the local work. Two members of SPT do mostly local long-term *assessoria* (support) and workshops.

In other words, there is a division of labor, again with some cross-overs, between 1) those who do *oficinas* or workshops and *assessoria*, i.e. the local work—in the case of F&S the women who attend in the clinic, 2) those who engage in research and training activities including in other states, and 3) the women who represent the organization either in national/international women's meetings and activities/networks or in NGO networks, and are responsible for fund-raising activities (contacts with donors).

For example, Nara, coordinator of SPT, said during her interview that she no longer does *oficinas*, but works on the political relations of the organization and conducts training ("*cursos*" "*seminários*"). She does help one of the staff member with *assessoria* to the *Central dos Movimentos Populares* (Federation of Popular Movements). Similarly, two of the founding members of F&S no longer see patients in the clinic. One of them is conducting research projects, including an international research project. The other looks for funding and maintains contacts with financing agencies, participates in Latin American and international feminist networks, and conducts research and training. The group rarely gives workshops anymore, unless they are linked to a research project. In another NGO, similarly, those women who represent the organization at national and international meetings are no longer giving workshops to grassroots groups, as a slightly embittered junior member noted to me.

This leads to a crystallization of knowledge differences and leadership roles which is criticized and resented by junior or less prominent members, as we will discuss in chapter 7. This constitutes one of the challenges to internal democracy of NGOs.

### Feminist identity and Administrative Staff

The logic within an identity-based social movement is that members share a common identity and common goals. I was surprised to discover that the administrative personnel at F&S were neither feminist nor linked to any movement prior to being hired. In the case of SPT, two members of its administrative staff (the cleaning lady/receptionist and the maintenance person) were members of health movements prior to being hired, while their administrative manager was a PT militant and friend of one of the members. Similarly, 6 of the 7 participate very occasionally, or not at all, in feminist events. The exception is Laura, SPT custodial lady/receptionist, who did start participating in workshops and conferences on women's health after she joined SPT.

Most claimed that their hiring interview had not been different from other interviews they had had (all three F&S employees and SPT's administrative coordinator, i.e. 4 out of seven interviewed). Two members of SPT did not mention their interview since one came in first as a consultant and ended up staying... for 9 years.. and the other was the cleaning lady/receptionist whom I did not ask about her hiring interview, showing my own bias.

The F&S accountant, Cleusa, for example, remembered that she had been selected with the help of a financial consultant. Rachel, a technical staff member, referred to the selection criteria of Cleusa: "we did not need a feminist accountant." She added that it was different with a secretary or a gynecologist:

When you hire a secretary or a gynecologist, this question is more important, the need to have a person who understands a bit better where she is going to work, how she will be integrated in the work done, which is a little bit, which we consider a little bit different from that of another organization there in the private sector.

In a striking contrast, SPT's librarian, who had been selected not by SPT but by a member of CIM, the *Centro Informação Mulher*, a feminist volunteer group, was emphatic that the interview had been very different from other interviews she had gone through. The person who hired her did not ask much about her professional qualifications but talked about women's questions and how she would be thrilled (*apaixonada*) about the job and would grow a lot. She asked her whether she liked to read, to write and to learn.

Despite the limitations of their involvement with the group, all three administrative personnel at F&S and most at SPT expressed that working for a feminist NGO had changed their lives as women...and men. Two women felt that they had changed but not as drastically, either because they already shared feminist ideas or were activists beforehand.

Carol of F&S was very articulate in expressing these changes.<sup>9</sup> In her own words:

Well there is no doubt, I changed quite a bit, Gee! Even discovering certain values that when you work outside [of F&S] you don't perceive much, as a woman, as an individual. [...] I started liking myself a bit more. A bunch of doubts I had regarding myself, the fact of being a woman, what it means for society, what is my place in this society, how important I am in this society [... I asked Carol for specific examples of change] For example, now I feel more at-ease to talk about sex, with my boyfriend. Now I can talk about it openly. I can also talk about abortion with a bit more liberty than in the past. I can also talk about these things with my daughter, she is 12, and soon she will be of age as we say. So I can talk with her quite a bit about these issues.

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<sup>9</sup> Other members reported being "more mature," discussing women's issues with their partner and family, feeling like they contribute to the betterment of society, having become comfortable with their own body, feeling freer, less prisoner of social rules: "*me soltei*" "*me sinto solta*." The only man I interviewed admitted that he now understands why it is important to share housework.



### Collective versus Individual Incentives and Rewards and the Logic of Identity

There is no doubt that most NGO activists I interviewed have a strong identity as feminists. We will discuss this in the coming chapter. However, unlike classical movement organizations where people's rewards for participating are mostly purposive, such as the satisfaction to work for "the cause" and for the feelings of belonging it provides them (i.e. internal motivators), feminist NGO activists receive a wage for the work they do (external motivators). So far, the NGOs I worked with minimized the impact of this external motivator by paying everyone equally, independently of which project she works on or which type of work she is doing, depending on the number of hours she works. This effort reflects their original collectivist-democratic ethos.

By the time I was leaving São Paulo, SPT was discussing with its Board of Directors whether and how to establish differential wages considering the differentiated contributions of individual members. Similarly, pushed by current financial difficulties, an animated discussion was held on the theme of false equality (*falsa igualdade*) at F&S: some members do more than others, so it is unfair if all receive the same wage. They discussed the possibility that individual members become financially dependent on the particular project they work on. This could create competitive tensions as was exemplified by the fact that in another case, some members complained about a colleague who insisted that her salary was guaranteed until the end of the year because the project she was working on ended at that time. F&S is also contemplating the introduction of a *plano de carreira* or career plan. This has already been done in another feminist NGO. Faced with the need to deal with individual differences, NGOs might take big steps towards individualized incentives and rewards.

Maybe the most extreme form of such individualized incentive and reward, as well as instrumental rather than primarily purposive relation, is subcontracting. Subcontracting is very much at odds with the internal logic of a traditional social movement organization where a member's identity, personality and commitment to the organization are essential. Subcontracting reflects a logic where "substituting" one person for another is not a problem, which is more akin to bureaucracies than to social movements. Moreover, it creates one more category of staff members with potential for further differentiation and hierarchization. It will not be easy for NGOs committed to participatory principles to include subcontracted personnel in the decision-making process, considering their transient nature.

The groups I worked with did not hire subcontracted labor. However, Monica, one of SPT's most recent recruits, argued in an informal conversation, that the way out of SPT's financial difficulties would be to have only a few permanent staff taking care of the paperwork while the rest of the staff should be hired according to the needs of the organization. She thinks it is possible to define exactly what you want to do and have the people you hire do this for you. She added that she was the only one thinking this way; the others hold the idea of team work very dearly. Monica worked for a development NGO before joining SPT. In fact, SPT did try to hire a former staff member on a short-term contract basis.

Other women's NGOs have started subcontracting some of their personnel. It is not always a positive experience for those subcontracted: An anthropology Master's student who had done research for a feminist NGO on a contract basis recalled how she felt looked down upon by some NGO members. She added that many of her friends no longer wanted to work with more seasoned feminists because they felt exploited and did not feel they received any

real training. She also did not appreciate the competition she felt, and complained about the lack of participatory principles in the organization. Maybe more worrisome is the fact that this young woman was left stranded without work when 8 months pregnant, as the project grant came to an end. She was not given a chance to work in the office or to contribute to the data analysis, being told that it was unscientific for the same person to do both tasks. In an ironic twist, the research project she worked on focused on reproductive rights.

To conclude, NGOs are pushed, in part as a result of the financial crisis they are experiencing, towards more instrumental relations within the organization, as well as towards abandoning some of the collectivist-democratic ideals of their beginnings as they have to deal with differentiated individual contribution (table 4-3 summarizes the organizational characteristics of NGOs and volunteer organizations discussed so far). Besides the current financial crisis of the NGO sector, other processes have contributed to these organizational changes, which I will turn to in the following section.

### Why a More Formalized, Segmented Organizational Structure ?

#### Volunteer Groups' Administrative Challenges

Organizations with minimal commitment and obligations to outside institutions and bureaucracies such as volunteer movement organizations experience real difficulties in ensuring continuity in the work they do. It is basically linked to the fact that activists involved in a struggle might not feel enticed by the nitty-gritty work of administrative obligations.

Table 4-3: Organizational Characteristics of Volunteer and Professionalized Groups

Organization Name	Type of organization	Social Control Mechanism	Level of class homogeneity in core group/tech. staff	Organizational structure	Roles in core group/tech. staff	Types of rewards	Individual Difference in power & capacity
<b>Feminista &amp; Saúde</b>	Professionalized	Board of Directors are technical staff members	More homogeneous	Technical versus administrative staff	Well-defined & fairly specific	Purposive and material	Well-accepted
<b>Saúde Para Todas</b>	Professionalized	Board of Directors independent from staff but w/ little real power. Restricted General Assembly	More homogeneous	Technical versus administrative staff	Some level of definition. In search of more	Purposive and material	Creates tension
<b>Casa da Mulher</b>	Volunteer	General Assembly	Less homogeneous	1 paid member/administrative staff	No definition	Purposive	Small group w/ little tension
<b>Mulheres Unidas</b>	Volunteer	General Assembly	Less homogeneous	Alternative forms (rotating on call)	No definition	Purposive	Creates tension

Beatriz of The Casa explains the need for better administrative organization, which she and other members equate with their "*amadorismo*" (amateurism), and of the consequences of lack of planning, and of indefinition of tasks and responsibilities:

It ends up engendering actions which are very improvised. So we always end up improvising. So, for example, when we organize an activity with another NGO, for example we are working on a women and Aids project with F&S. That's when we perceive the difference between an intervention that is only more or less structured and an intervention which is well structured, and in this situation we clearly realize that we are at a disadvantage or that we have greater difficulties. Greater difficulties with the paperwork! We have difficulties with our administrative organization so things do not flow easily.

The Casa da Mulher has one permanent staff person who deals with the reception/secretarial tasks in the Casa and is remunerated for that work. Eleonora spends 4 hours every day of the week in the Casa. She was appointed to this position by the General Assembly of the Casa, against her mother's will, who is also a leading member. The mother was afraid of being accused of nepotism. Eleonora's position is closer to the Casa's members than are NGOs' administrative staff to their technical team. Still, she is not fully integrated in the activities of the group.<sup>10</sup> Beyond the receptionist/secretarial work done by Eleonora, numerous administrative tasks are filled by the other members, especially Flora and Moema.

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<sup>10</sup> Eleonora feels integrated, although she did mention that she would enjoy being more active in the Casa's activities. Her mother would like to see her more integrated as well. She made a point of telling me that I should interview Eleonora because she was a member of the group. Eleonora did take part in two out of the four Casa's meetings I participated in but she mostly listened and did not voice her opinion. She also had to answer the telephone and to receive those who came in. She has never led activities such as workshops. She blames it on her shyness. She also recognizes that her mother expects her to be an activist, and expects more from her because she is her daughter ("*cobra como filha*").

Mulheres Unidas, over its almost 15 years of existence, experienced a number of solutions to the administrative problem. By the time I arrived in São Paulo, the group paid a young feminist activist, Clara, a compensatory fee to handle the paperwork and the telephone, while a three member financial committee took care of the accounting and legal matters. Clara was considered a full member of the organization with responsibilities other than just administrative. For example, when MU organized a bus to participate in a demonstration against violence against women in the city of Santos, Clara spoke on the microphone representing the organization. However, difficulties arose and, dissatisfied with the situation, Clara left. None of what really happened with Clara and why she left was ever verbalized clearly either by Clara herself or by the others. From innuendoes I inferred that there had been issues of control and power over what Clara should be doing and confusion resulting from the lack of organization and definition of roles.

During one of their weekly meetings, the group evaluated the different possibilities to take care of the administrative work: 1) they could organize a "*plantão*," (rotating on call) i.e. to have several persons sign up for a day of the week when they would come to answer the phone and take care of the paperwork; This *plantão* could be remunerated or not; 2) they could have a secretary, which could be hired either in an informal way, i.e. a friend/activist or relative who would receive compensatory fees, or a professional secretary hired with a regular wage.

Of the seven women present at the meeting, three were in favor of a rotating system. One felt that a hired secretary had been a "*conquista*" (conquest). The others did not voice their opinion on the topic. It was argued that the advantages of the rotating system are that it brings those who participate in it closer to the life of the organization and a better

knowledge of the organization. The disadvantage is that they would need enough people to sign up and to keep up with their pledge. It is also difficult to pass the information from one person to the next for follow-ups. The solution of a "talking agenda" was then suggested.

Hiring a secretary, with a full wage or compensatory fees, was always complicated and had always caused problems, according to Tatiana in part because the secretary has four people (*quatro chefes*) to tell her what to do. She personally "is horrified by [their] experiences with secretaries" (*tem pavor da nossa experiência com secretárias*).

After 6 months of the rotating system, all agreed during a General Assembly meeting, that it had not worked because people were not showing up, leaving the work for the three women who live in the house adjacent to the headquarters. They discussed again the possibility of hiring somebody and decided they needed a full day to discuss these matters. Unfortunately, I could not attend this discussion. In any case the situation remained unchanged until the end of my stay in São Paulo.

This comes to show the administrative difficulties faced by organizations with minimal commitment and obligations to outside institutions and bureaucracies. These difficulties are basically linked to the fact that activists involved in a struggle are not enticed by the nitty-gritty work of administrative obligations. Beyond simple administrative, permanent contact issues, indefinition of roles and tasks also is problematic when trying to get things done as Alessandra mentioned earlier: people do what they feel like doing, not necessarily what needs to be done.

"The Logic of Projects" and Management of Grant Money

A strong push towards formalization comes from the "logic of projects" (*lógica dos projetos*) with well-defined time frames as Marina of SPT put it:

An NGO, because of the issue of project financing, and of projects which give a more systematic character to the work, will tend to be more...to have more...a more professional organization, things have more specific deadlines, more specific responsibilities, more specific goals, and it is not always the case that your work is based on conjunctural emergencies.

In other words, projects necessitate a structure that ensures that planning is possible through specialization of tasks and respect of deadlines etc. The division of labor, in particular with the introduction of a separate administrative staff dedicated to the maintenance of the organization, as well as the introduction of more regular "business" hours, are also part of this effort to "rationalize" the production process of the organization.

A second important element in the creation of a division of labor and more formal, differentiated roles was the difficulty of dealing with the technicality of accounting for grant moneys. Rachel (F&S) recalls:

Before her [the in-house accountant] we had to do all the fingerprint work of accounting, this everyday accounting work, and we got the help of an accounting office. But with an accounting office you need to give them the accounts already in order so that they can close them. So it was not possible. We had to deal more and more with this work and we were not there for that, that's for sure. So we hired an accountant really because of that. So it happened in stages: us from the technical team --the health team-- ended up taking care of the coordinating part of the work, the part that's related to the projects and reports. And we delegated the day-to-day work, which is really also the biggest part of the work, to Cleusa.

Rachel also explained that the NGO accounting is more complex than regular business accounting. At the beginning F&S was receiving money from one agency, then it was two, and now there are many more projects. Every agency has its specifications for



accounting and money must be disbursed accordingly. They really needed a specialist of the area.

Then the administrative staff itself, used to regular business practices, pushes for further routinization and rules. F&S administrative staff for example took the initiative to meet to discuss a reorganization of their tasks. An administrative staff member:

There was a period when... we started meeting, once a week...to try and organize the tasks, solicitations, etc. But this is what I told you, they [the technical staff] are not used to the way a firm works. The more the three of us met, the more we realized what needed to be changed, why it needed to change, we gave suggestions, we drew some conclusions and decided on a course of action and posted it on the management bulletin board. But this really disturbed them. I noticed that it disturbed them a lot... so we stopped meeting. [...] Helena especially did not want to create any conflicts.

In short this initiative for more defined roles and rules, and pushing for further formalization, was not very well-received by the technical staff, so that they discontinued their effort. This shows again the limits of participation by administrative staff in the organization of their own work and their subaltern role in the organization. As this employee put it "It is clear for me that F&S wants me to walk up to this line, so it is up to me to decide if I want to continue here with this limitation, or if I want to look for something where I want to grow more." Despite these limitations, administrative staff members generally reported feeling respected. The same employee told me later during her interview that "I do not feel restrained here at F&S in what I do. I give ideas, and they use my ideas and sign underneath."

Maybe more interestingly, this incident highlights the resistance feminists at F&S feel when faced with the increasing formalization for which the administrative staff is pushing. This employee had complained of the informality with which she was asked to perform certain tasks; she wanted them written on paper so that there would not be any

mistakes or misunderstandings. Rachel's quote at the beginning of this chapter is symptomatic of the doubts and anxiety F&S feminists are experiencing at the increasing formalization of their organization.

These doubts and anxieties underline the importance of organizational structure and practices to feminist activists when it comes to defining their group and differentiating it from other feminist groups. This appeared clearly in the interviews of volunteer organizations. MU's three leading members referred to the anarchic nature of the organization in statements such as "we are very anarchical" or "our type of organization is very anarchical" ("*somos muito anárquicas*" or "*a nossa maneira de organizar é meio anárquica*"). Three other members referred to their lack of professionalization as setting them apart from other feminist organizations. At the Casa, four members used their organizational form to distinguish it from other feminist groups on both side of the spectrum: The Casa "has a space" ("*tem espaço*") which other "popular" feminist groups do not have, which gives them more possibilities but "It is not professional. It is not an NGO with a more formal administrative structure" while "it is not in all organization that anybody can participate and be part of the coordination. The Casa has this power to integrate people" ("*não é profissional. Não é ONG com estrutura administrativa mais formal*") while "*não é em cada uma [entidade] que dá para entrar e ficar na coordenação. A Casa tem esse poder de integrar as pessoas dentro*") On the other hand F&S members focussed on how well-organized and established the organization was. Rachel noted that the organizational form is what had most changed over the years. At SPT only Marina referred to organizational issues when asked about the identity of the group. She talked about the changing nature of the group from movement to NGO that was referred to at other times by other members.

In part, this emphasis on organizational issues can be traced to participants' awareness of my work on these issues. However, this response is also consistent with studies on the US feminist movement which have shown that organizational issues do matter to activists since they usually consider that their internal structure and practices should be consistent with their egalitarian ideology. In these studies, as among São Paulo feminists, many an activist would not want to work in an organization that deviates from the norms of collectivist-democratism (Ferree 1992: 46).

### Conclusion

Unlike the idealist collectivist dream of egalitarianism, NGOs are forced, because of the constraints imposed by the need to secure funding, and hence to be competent and time-efficient at what they do, to consider issues of individual competence, capacities and availability. Rachel said : "So in terms of our differences, I think that we are constantly learning, all the time, to deal with our differences, differences of power, differences of capacity."

NGOs experiment with transparent, differentiated, semi-hierarchical structures, while voluntary groups persevere in the feminist ideal of nonhierarchical, nondifferentiated collectives with all their contradictions. Both SPT and F&S are struggling with the original collectivist character of their organization, as they find it difficult to accommodate to the tasks they have to perform and the goals they have set for themselves. Unfortunately, the current economic crisis NGOs are facing is likely to make it even harder for them to explore new sociabilities and alternative forms of organizations.

The coming chapter will examine how these organizational practices affect members' individual identity, commitment and solidarity to the group as well as the groups' collective identity, namely their strategy for social change.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE LABOR OF LOVE AND BREAD: ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES, INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITIES

#### Introduction

I now wish to return to our discussion of how organizational forms influence individual and collective identity, and solidarity, as presented in chapter 2. I have mentioned the fact that consensual decision-making heightens group members' commitment to the decisions made, and hence increases solidarity.<sup>1</sup> Other practices that encourage value-rationality (commitment and values other than self-interest) have been identified by Rothschild-Whitt (1979). These include authority based in the collective without hierarchical structure,<sup>2</sup> homogeneity used as a method of social control, i.e. to limit potential conflicts; holistic and affective rather than segmented role-based and instrumental social relationships among members; and an incentive structure

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<sup>1</sup> Ana Maria (F&S) understands very well the commitment dimension of consensual decision-making: "I think that the positive aspect [of this model of decision-making] is that people have to take charge, each person has to take charge of a responsibility, right? I mean, of what is going on in F&S. I mean, in reality, I think that this forces people to get involved more, to make decisions and to jump in, right?"

<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, Hechter (1987) found that the longest living intentional communities with strong communal ideology are highly hierarchical. This is because the subordination of individuals' will to the general will takes the shape of unquestioning obedience toward leaders. This longevity might be explained by the fact that non-hierarchical, democratic organizations place a high value on consensus, hence conflict tends to be feared and avoided. People also deal face-to-face with each other with high personal involvement and emotional intensity (Mansbridge 1982; Rothschild-Whitt 1979).

relying on purposive and solidary incentives, such as participating for "the cause," or for the sake of the collective, rather than on material incentives; and finally minimal stratification of jobs thus demystifying specialized knowledge.

The organizational characteristics I have described in chapter 4 for NGOs included greater division of labor between administrative and technical staff as well as among technical staff, more planning efforts, fewer regular meetings, greater reliance on rules, greater individual and material rewards, relative stratification in terms of pay and partly instrumental relationships among members (all of this compared to volunteer organizations). According to Rothschild-Whitt and Ferree these would not be as favorable an environment for value-rationality, high level of commitment, and solidarity among members compared to minimal stratification of tasks and pay, mostly purposive incentives —ie little material rewards—, and noninstrumental social relationships among members. NGOs' set of organizational characteristics would on the other hand favor greater formal rationality (i.e. cost/benefit calculations based on self-interest). This is the first set of issues I will address in this chapter, looking at the meaning volunteer and especially professionalized activists give to their participation in an NGO and how this translates in terms of identity and solidarity. A second related set of issues to be addressed in this chapter concerns the relationship of these organizational features and some associated practices with the collective identity of the groups, in terms of how members view their organization and what goals they set for themselves, broadly speaking, as movement-oriented or as policy-centered institutions.

From "Militância" to "Work" and Back: The Meaning of Working in a Feminist NGO

As a way of introduction, I want to draw a parallel between the activities of professionalized feminists and my own, as a feminist doing research. We both agree with the need for social change and have found a way of contributing to it that is consistent with how we feel we can best contribute as well as with the type of lives we want to lead. Still, for me doing research, and for them working for an NGO, is also "work", i.e. how we get bread on the table<sup>3</sup>, and "career," how we get acknowledgment from others. We end up doing certain things because we have to. I fully realized this when, after seeing me at four different women's events in the course of a week-end, one professionalized activist commented to me "*Quê militância!*" (something to the effect of "What a dedicated activism!") to which I responded "No, that's work." At that point, had I had the choice and no obligation to my research, I would have stayed home and rested!

We also end up doing things because, careerwise, they are more important. In what might seem a trivial example but which clearly shows the dilemma of establishing priorities, throughout writing my dissertation I knew that I needed to translate a summary of my findings into Portuguese to make it more accessible to the groups I had worked with. I agonized over the fact that I did not have the time to translate it, considering how overwhelmed I felt with writing up and that finishing the dissertation was my primary goal.

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<sup>3</sup> Not all feminist academics agree with this statement. It can be indeed argued that what is really putting bread on the table in their case is teaching students on various topics within their discipline rather than feminist activism per se. They also argue that they do not claim to represent anybody. On this account, I would retort that, like NGO activists, they can be called upon as "gender experts," whether they want to represent others or not.

Had I been an activist, I would have done it. Had I been in Brazil, the pressure for doing it would also have been stronger.

As we will see, volunteer activists express a strong emotional attachment to their organization and unambiguously identify their activities as activism (*militância*). This attachment is not as consistent in NGOs where some members likewise consider their activities as activism, but others consider it more as work, although they very much value the social change/advocacy dimension of it. I would say that for most NGO members their work has become a mix of activism and means for providing a livelihood at varying degrees. In other words, there is no doubt that the identity and commitment of a number of NGO members has been influenced by their professionalized status. However, the impact is not as strong as one might have imagined as a result of the hybrid nature of NGOs' organizational features (compared to "businesses" or bureaucracies), their activist history, as well as of the limitations placed on individual rewards by lack of job security and social benefits in NGOs.

What, then, are the meanings<sup>4</sup> that different participants attribute to their activities: Two members of MU went as far as to say they had "*uma paixão*" a passion for the organization "I have a passion for MU" ("*tenho uma paixão pela MU*" and "*estou apaixonada pela MU*." ) One of them recently had left the organization. In the words of a third member, some women had given up part of their personal life for MU. The members

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<sup>4</sup> My questionnaire did not ask any specific question about the meaning of their activities to the women I interviewed, although I now wish it had. However, as I reviewed my fieldnotes and interviews this arose as an important theme, at times brought up by the women themselves. The meaning the women gave to their feminist activities is reflected in their statements and behaviors towards work, activism and leisure time.



of the Casa da Mulher were not as vocal about their emotions about the organization, although the Casa was a tremendous part of their lives too.

Among the professionalized groups I worked with, I identified a dual identity (activism/work) and difficulties in separating the two. Marina of SPT expressed how both elements are present but also how difficult it is for her to tease out one from the other:

N - Your participation in SPT, do you see it as professional or activist participation?

Marina - I think that it is a mix. It is impossible to separate the two. I was hired by SPT to work 6 hours a day. I have to report my hours, I have to write reports, to fill in the weekly planner, to follow the timetable of the organization, so this is the professional side. I have to be competent and prepared for the work I do. Now, the type of questions that are SPT's main axis for intervention end up pushing the activist side. So, although I am paid to work 6 hours a day, there are days when I work 18 and I consider that it is a mix. But when I talk about the activities that I develop at SPT I do not consider them directly as an activist activity. I define them as professional. Now, my participation in the women's movement, which I do starting from SPT, starting from whatever is decided within the organization, but there I go with my activist experience as well. This is how I manage to define this situation.

Marina then showed how her activism in the Black movement influenced her work at SPT: "Now the race issue, from the moment I started to be involved with this issue, this influenced my life within SPT." Marina continued discussing how her work at SPT allowed her to give a "*contribuição diferenciada*" (differentiated contribution) with regard to the issue of the intersection of race and gender within the black movement and as a result she was in a position of leadership when the black women's movement came along:

So I got there half with the status of leadership, I got there assuming positions, writing documents, I don't know what else, coordinating roundtables, right? and rapidly I was involved in the process, with the people. These were very intense moments in my life.

Similarly, Sandra from F&S distinguishes the work she does on the projects she works on and her participation in movement-wide activities:

I think that F&S is a group which works simultaneously with both...with both possibilities. A remunerated professional work and a nonprofessional activity [...] For example, today...tonight there is a discussion about [the conference of] Cairo, I was... there are always other types of activities, different from the work itself.

For her, as for most activists who entered NGOs, bringing together activism and job is a conquest and it is ethically correct:

Really, I like to work at something in which I believe from a political point of view. So, if I can reconcile my professional work with my political activism so that they become one, I will try to make it happen. I think that it is ethically correct [...] So, the fact that you work in a stinking job in which you do not believe in order to justify that in your free time you can go be an activist, I think that this argument...I am not saying that I have the right way of seeing things, [...] but for me it does not make any sense at all.

Members of Sande, a black women's NGO with which I conducted a collective interview also expressed the ambiguous or dual nature of their relationship to their activities (see Figure 5-1 at the end of this chapter).

### Individual Activist History and Moment of Entry in NGO

The emphasis on the "work" component of working in NGOs is more obvious among newer participants than among long-time or founding members. Indeed, long-time and founding members of Feministas e Saúde expressed commitment and a strong emotional attachment to the organization. The situation is different for newly-hired members. The following exchange, as recorded in my fieldnotes, between members of the team during one of their meetings expresses this difference: The newly hired Silvia "said that it was important for everybody to know that if she is supposed to work for 12 hours, she is going to work 12 hours and not more since she has another job. She said another member of the NGO had been joking with her once, saying that she was never there. She

did not want to be "*cobrada*" (reminded) for doing only the number of hours they had decided upon." Later on, Silvia and another new member argued "that women do not value their work, i.e. not paying well (most wages for NGO professionals are considerably lower than private sector wages). Ana Maria, one of the founding members replied that it was not a question of not valuing their work but for her, it was "*uma opção de vida*" (a chosen lifestyle). She could be working in international organizations as a consultant and earn a lot more money and what they earn is in line with other NGO salaries [fieldnotes 18 October 95].

In the case of the Afro-Brazilian women's NGO Sande (see Figure 5-1) the dichotomy appears again between Nadia who has been involved in the movement for much longer and emphasizes the activism side of her participation in Sande, and Lília who is a young teacher and activist and perceives more clearly the "work" part of her involvement with the organization.

So, while Silvia wishes for a clearly defined, relatively well-paid job, Ana Maria has made a conscious choice to participate because of what she believes in, and accepts the consequences. Similarly, Rachel during her interview referred to her limited wage which does not meet all of the needs of her family, and recognized that her husband's income is helping her maintain herself and the family. She said: "it is a choice you make; now I don't know, me for example, if I had to separate from my husband, if I would not have to make other professional options as well." In other words, as Sandra puts it "We have a degree of activism which is very different from one person to the next here at F&S."

It is interesting to note that Silvia is a leading figure of a volunteer feminist organization in São Paulo and hence she is more likely to consider her participation in F&S as a job indeed, while her participation in the other group is her space for activism. Still, the meaning of her participation in F&S is not absolutely clear in her mind as was shown during her interview a few months earlier. She had also sensed that other members of the group felt differently from her in this regard.

She started by explaining how different it is to work at F&S, compared with her job in the public health sector, because:

Silvia - People know me, they know my life. [...] It's not like I need to punch the timecard [...] I already had experienced this with my comrades [of the group she militates in], let's say, I already had this experience, but in a situation of activism, which is different.

N - A situation of activism which is different? So you consider your participation here as a job?

Silvia - It's both, it ends up being, it's complicated and I feel that the people who are here, they do not have this, because their experience has always been here [...] So sometimes there is a bit of a lack of what is the experience of work in the public service, you know this ugly, bureaucratic thing, but which helps you establish certain roles, define roles better, clarify certain things.

N - Of course, it is not like any firm!

Silvia - But at the same time it is a firm, I mean, there is no way we could treat it all as if it was...

N - As if it was what?

Silvia - Activism, an activist activity.

### Money versus Belonging

What is it then that makes participation in an NGO so different, in individual terms from participation in a volunteer organization. Silvia:

Basically, I think that the greatest difference is that as activists people do the things they want, they are mobilized only by their consciousness, it is the great limit. Now here no, here there is also a relation of delivering some service, of something. Here, and in any place where people are paid for what they do. I don't know [...]

there are people, even the money that they receive to live, I don't know how to put it, it does not matter if they are paid or not, they do things. But this is a very special situation, I don't know, of some very special leaders. In general, when somebody receives money, I mean, when s/he lives from this work, I think that the relation changes. Then, I am not doing it only because this is important, I am going to do it also because if I don't do it I won't be paid, if I don't do it they'll fire me, if I don't do it this project will not be renewed. In other words, this other component.

Silvia's thinking that remuneration changes the relationship of a participant to the group is expressed by Deise who joined SPT in 1989 "I have always looked for a group to which I could belong." Backtracking in her career, she talked about her work as a social worker for the state: "at that time the only thing I had, as a characteristic, was to be a social worker, but this was not...it was not there that I wanted to invest emotionnally!" She was participating in the Board of Directors of the Regional Council of Social Workers. Then she started working for SPT.

Deise - I think that my participation in SPT reinforced a bit this experience [from the Board of Directors], but it reinforced and gave it another face. This thing as a woman, to have this identity, to feel as belonging to this group, this large group, it is a feeling of belonging, of identity, it is...to be a part of ...which really satisfies me because it is very large too. This is what I would like is to have... because SPT is a job, no? It is different from a women's group in which you participate.

N - Yes

Deise - So, I think that ...it would be great to have a type of belonging which would be more restricted within this women's question.

N - Very interesting what you are saying. Because I already noticed that NGOs are a mixed thing, the other women's organizations which are not professionalized have this thing of total belonging...

Deise - It is different, it is another relation. What is closer to the movement, a group, it can be a more formal group which has a routine...but I think that the big difference is remuneration. Because even when it is a movement, when some persons are compensated, the relation with money changes a lot the insertion of this person in the movement not only on her part but also on the part of others, of what they expect from her. So it is a different relation and I think that an essential element that divides them is remuneration. It is not whether it is an NGO, if it calls itself an NGO, a group or a movement. The fact is that this is really complicated.

For Deise, working for a feminist NGO strengthened her identity as a woman and as a participant in the women's movement. Still she wishes to participate in a group to which she would "belong" completely, in which she would not "work". The commodified quality of her relationship to the group alters its meaning.

In conclusion, there is no doubt that the identity of a number of NGO members is different from that of volunteer activists and that the presence of financial rewards plays a large role in this process. For most, their activities have become a blend of work and activism. These women's testimonies attest to the theory that when extrinsic motivators, in this case money, are present, they are perceived by the interested individuals and by observers as more salient than intrinsic motivators, such as commitment to the group's goals. These, however, are very much also present. Indeed, Myra Marx Ferree (1992:34) warns us that

extrinsic motivators, such as financial rewards [...], tend to be more salient as causes of behavior; when they are present, they tend to reduce the extent to which intrinsic motivators (perceived interest, value or commitment) are seen as producing behavior both in oneself and in others (Bem 1970). Thus adding external incentives to an intrinsically motivated task can actually decrease the amount of effort devoted to it oneself and discredit the motives of others as "merely" self-interested.

Such tendencies are indeed mitigated by individual characteristics and activist history, as well as by the hybrid nature of feminist professionalized organizations, as Marina's testimony expressed particularly well.

### Solidarity and Self-Interest

Abstract concepts such as commitment and solidarity are difficult to get at, let alone to evaluate and compare. The discussion of the possibility of individualized projects I mentioned

in chapter 4 certainly points in the direction of increased individual self-interest calculations in NGOs.<sup>5</sup> Who could blame them: after all, NGO members' sustenance is at stake and it depends on the maintenance of the organization. Lines are indeed difficult to draw when one's own personal sustenance comes into play. For example, a feminist who had just left an NGO asked a popular feminist group whether she could use the name of their organization to send a project to a financing agency which did not accept individual proposals. In the popular feminists' understanding, this woman was willing to use their group for her individual sustenance while forgetting the necessity of collective action. They would have welcomed the woman had she wanted to participate with the group. They would then have evaluated how her project fit with their activities. Vice-versa, an NGO staff who does not fit the competence or goals agreed upon by the rest of the group can be fired. This is never done light-heartedly and generates much anxiety for the group.

SPT's staff commitment to the goals of the organization are undeniable. In terms of solidarity and care of individual members, however, the situation is unclear. It is symptomatic that one member acknowledged that it had felt like a duty to have to visit one of her colleagues at the maternity hospital when she had given birth. According to one member, a colleague received little help and support when she faced serious domestic violence problems. On the other hand, Marina expressed the emotional difficulties she was facing when she finally decided that she had to leave the organization. Again, she was emotionally involved and committed to the goals of the organization.

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<sup>5</sup> See chapter 4 "collective versus individual incentives and rewards and the logic of identity"

Nevertheless, I could hardly describe SPT and F&S as nonsolidary, noncommitted groups whose relations are solely role-based and instrumental. F&S technical staff is a fairly close-knit group of women with personal friendships, at least for the long-time members. There is definitely more than an instrumental relationship there: Marlene once confided the high emotional involvement she and the other members have with the organization and with each other. If I needed any more proof, my visit to her house after she had to move to another city was quite telling. She had a picture of the group prominently displayed on her coffee table and lamented missing the group and the political dimension of the work she was doing in São Paulo.

What accounts for this relative strength of commitment and solidarity ? The fact is that their organizational characteristics place NGOs at midcourse between a bureaucracy and a typical collectivist-democratic organization because a bureaucracy has a much greater division of labor and income stratification, totally individual rewards and almost entirely instrumental relationships among members. The small size of the groups, the history of activism of most NGO members (in the groups I worked with) and the meaning they attribute to their activities also contribute to limiting the potential for greater formal rationality and direct cost-benefit analysis at the individual level in feminist NGOs, while maintaining value-rationality, commitment and solidarity (at varying degrees depending on individual groups). This might be more difficult to maintain if the organization grows and hires new staff members who have not had an activist experience.

Besides, working for an NGO does not confer only advantages at a very individual level. The drawbacks of this type of career are significant. For educated professionals, it means accepting a salary lower than the lifestyle they are accustomed to, as well as no



employment benefits or job security. Indeed the NGOs I worked with made sure that their administrative staff enjoyed formal employment benefits through the *carteira assinada*, the document which provides them, among others, with retirement money and minimum health coverage. On the other hand, most NGOs' technical staff do not have a *carteira assinada* because the organization cannot afford the dues that formal employers are required to pay. This means that NGO staff do not enjoy the social benefits of formal employment, which prompted Tatiana of MU to label them the "*camelots das profissões liberais*" (gypsy professionals). SPT's case is different because it obtained in the past the status of "*entidade de utilidade pública*" (public entity) which liberates the organization from paying employers' dues to the State. SPT's 30 something years of existence have been a plus in obtaining this status. Brazil's well-known bureaucratic maze makes it difficult for organizations to obtain this status or to even try.

NGO members are increasingly aware of this lack of benefits and of the paradox it creates, considering that NGOs often seek to improve such public social benefits for all Brazilians. In the words of Dora, member of Sande:

Dora - Now, I am quite critical of our position, you know, regarding...I think that we have to do something... I don't know, I have not discovered what yet, but together we will find out, all the NGOs. But we have to progress on this issue, we work for a certain quality of life and we do not guarantee it for ourselves (sounds of approbation from the others)

N - It is Fúlvia who brought this to my attention, she said...I can't remember exactly... that she had a friend who had commented that she was not going to have any retirement money.

Dora - I have been free-lance in research since I was 18 years old. I worked 13 years for the State, then I joined an NGO. You can imagine how much I am going to get (laughter). [...] Now we give up on certain rights which are already consolidated, because we give priority to the work that needs to be done, to a political vision, to what needs to be done. So the costs for our personal lives... are considerable.

Fúlvia, member of a volunteer organization, is emphatic in expressing her sympathy but disagreement with NGO members with regard to this issue, which she phrases in terms of lack of social rights:

We have comrades who have been there for 8, 9, 6, 5 years who gave up on everything and on any other type of professional project, on their professions, to dedicate themselves to NGOs. I think that it is remarkable, I really think so [...] There are people who gave up on their retirement plan for the last 8 or 9 years, because NGOs are an exploitation of labor, including of those who lead them, they have no social rights, no nothing. [...] What I can't understand is how our comrades fell for this one! All those that I know, here in São Paulo or in Minas Gerais, are university-educated women, with 10, 15 years of work in a given place, forced to leave everything behind to go open an NGO! From the point of view of their personal future, of their subsistence, it is an adventure with disastrous consequences, because NGOs do not secure their labor link, they hire you, they exploit you, from this point of view they exploit their own bosses, which is worse, because you are the boss of a thing and you are exploited by it.

Fúlvia continues to explain that for her, maintaining her rights for retirement and health coverage are also strategies to be able to participate more in the movement once she retires:

There is no project that will make me quit my [2] jobs, which guarantee this. I think that I am even protecting my potential for struggle. Pretty soon [with retirement] I will have more time for the movement and at my own cost, as my own boss. I go wherever I want to, I won't need anybody's charity.

Financing agencies play an important role in the insecurity of NGO work by financing specific projects rather than providing institutional support. Ana Maria from F&S for example explained that certain agencies, such as UNFPA (United Nations Fund for Population) explicitly state in their contracts that they do not finance employers' dues (*encargos sociais*) and vacations. And they justify it by saying that it is UN policy.

Lacking a social security card not only means no social benefits, it also signifies job insecurity. This is particularly true since the mid-90s when Latin American NGOs have

entered troubled financial waters. In order to protect themselves from adverse unpredictable circumstances, some NGO members are keeping a foot in the public sector, either as a part-time employee, as in the case of Silvia, or by some bureaucratic mechanism which allows the individual to remain on the public service rosters without actually working there or being paid. Silvia explains her insecurities about working only at F&S in terms of the responsibilities she has towards her children. She is separated from her husband:

I would never work only here at F&S because of my kids and I am not the type of person who manages to live in serenity without knowing what tomorrow will bring. I am kind of anxious to want to have things.

In other words, there are serious limitations on the material rewards offered by NGOs for the type of women who are their members. This limits the degree to which intrinsic motivators (such as commitment) are overshadowed by extrinsic rewards. There are other types of rewards, such as prestige and travel that NGOs offer to their most visible members which I will discuss again in Chapter 6 and 7.

### The Labor of Love and Bread

I hope to have shown that for most professionalized activists, their activities are a blend of work and activism. Hence collective work is no longer construed by most NGO members solely as "a labor of love" as Rothschild-Whitt (1979:515) puts it, but as "a labor of love and bread." Leilah Landim briefly refers to a similar process of NGO members coming to grasp with an activity which is both "*emprego/militância*" (work/activism). She compares it to the work of religious clergy as neither professional nor voluntary

(1993a:182). Therefore, my data supports MacCarthy and Zald's analysis that professionalization alters the meaning of membership to the group (1987[1973]:370).

On the other hand, it does not support their claim that "professional movement entrepreneurs" come from outside the movement or are systematically less committed to it. Like in Pam Oliver's study (1983), Brazilian feminist professionalized activists have come mostly from the ranks of committed activists. A Brazilian feminist sociologist of health similarly argued that NGO members would not do what they do without a commitment (*compromisso*), since they earn modest salaries in the context of the Brazilian middle-class of which they are part. As I have just discussed, they also give up on important social rights. In their own words, it is a chosen lifestyle (*uma opção de vida*). It becomes obvious that, if there is a definite aspect of earning a living with one's activism, few of the NGO women I interviewed would work in an NGO solely for self-interested motives, as some of their detractors sometimes claim. Finally, this new form of activism does create a pull for individual self-interest which might be detrimental to the solidarity of the group in the long run. Yet, this pull is so far not strong enough to counteract members' original solidarity if it was there to begin with.

#### Collective Identity: From Direct Action Movement to Advocacy Group

The collective identity of a group could be defined as "the shared definition of a group that derives from members' common interests, experiences and solidarity." (Taylor & Whittier 1992:105). My interpretation of the groups' collective identity is largely based on their shared values, and on the goals and characteristics they attribute to their organization, as well as on what they see as setting their group apart from other feminist groups, and from the wider

society. I drew this information from the individual interviews I conducted. My interpretation is also informed by the participant observation I conducted. I found the question about the difference with other feminist groups quite revealing in terms of the identity of the groups. This denotes the oppositional and relational nature of identity. Collective identity is also reflected in and reinforced by a group's headquarters' setting, the programs and activities they choose to engage in, their daily practices, and the interaction among members and with other institutions and other groups, as well as the way they present themselves in public forums. There are clear differences in the way groups think about themselves and how to achieve social change: I will present the collective identity of Mulheres Unidas and Feministas & Saúde because they offer the starkest contrast. However, I understand the four organizations to be more along a continuum rather than forming a dichotomy. Indeed The Casa and SPT are more hybrid.

#### Mulheres Unidas: It's Like a Train.. at the Rhythm of the Movement

The logo of Mulheres Unidas (MU) is a woman breaking out of her chains. "*A luta*" (the struggle) and "*denunciar*" (to denounce) are essential to their discourse and in their actions: for example they sent a fax to other organizations to denounce police violence against public service worker demonstrations. Two leaders of MU defined it as "a mobilizing organization" and "a mass organization." One said "MU is a spontaneous movement," the other: "[it's] a train because people get on and then get off, then get on again, [...] it does not really have the static characteristics of an organization, it is more like a movement, it fluctuates at the rhythm of the movement, at the rhythm of women's needs. So when it's moving and shaking out there, among women, it is moving and shaking in here as well, do you understand?"

In terms of practices, this is reflected in the fact that MU members constantly invite women to participate in their activities (including me). MU also sees itself as a multi-topic, non-specialized organization. A few members also emphasized that it is open to issues not only related to women's subordination but to other types of social injustices.

In keeping with this non-specialized "movement" identity, the organization's goals are very broad: "There is a ton: [it's] a space for women to take their problems and resolve them." "to struggle for real citizenship for women" "to fight discrimination, ensure citizenship, and not only of women" "[for] positive discrimination", so that "women be respected, rights be really respected. For black people, indians, children rights as well" "to improve the situation of women as citizens, through this organization they perceive what their potential is."

Only one person gave a more specific answer "fight against violence" (*combate a violencia*). On the other hand, when asked about the priorities of the organization, four mentioned the struggle against violence against women. Although MU is open to a number of issues, violence against women is indeed its forte.

There is still a strong emphasis in discourse on organizing the grassroots and a strong empathy and identification on the part of the leading members with working-class neighborhood women. However, in practice, the level of activities in the periphery has decreased significantly, especially since the core group moved from a location in the periphery to one in the center of the city. MU used to be almost entirely devoted to organizing neighborhood women (as shown in their 1988 video). The organization was born as a women's section of the Communist Party of Brazil but in 1987 cut its ties to the party.

Still, various satellite organizations, which are in fact mostly independent, use the name of the mother organization.

Feministas & Saúde: A Respected Health Policy-Centered NGO

The anchor of F&S identity is the direct services it offers. Its clinic was thought of as a pilot project to demonstrate the feasibility of holistic, primary care for women and to be replicated in public services.<sup>6</sup> Two leading members of the group, when asked about what were the characteristics of their organization, described F&S as a "stable organization" with stable employment" and "a solid experience and know-how, good contacts" and "influential," it is "a reference at the level of Latin America" which commands "great respect in the women's movement and among health professionals." It has "more credibility" with public authorities. Another member of the technical staff agreed that F&S was playing "a leadership role in the health question" (*um papel de liderança nessa questão da saúde*) as a result of its concrete clinical experience which gives it: "a distinguished position in terms of knowledge" "*um lugar destacado em termos de conhecimento*" while another insisted on its "serious and professional" character, "trying to improve its performance." The administrative staff also mentioned that F&S had "a great experience and amount of information and activities," had become "a reference point with regard to women's health services" and was "serious, very well-considered by other groups." A leader said "F&S like other NGOs [...] these are groups which are ...in the vanguard, in the frontline...with regard to everything...of the health question..."

The professional character of F&S is reflected in the language it uses. The women who come to the clinic are referred to as "users"(*usuarias*) (the term used in public services) and the

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<sup>6</sup> Three out of 7 technical staff mentioned the "*ambulatório*" or "*atendimento*"(clinical services) as a central characteristic of their organization. 4 members of the technical staff and all three administrative personnel saw the clinic as the characteristic which differentiates them from other women's health organizations in Brazil.

activities of the group as "*serviços*" or services. When I presented my research, I asked whether this would be the correct way to describe what they do and the leader of the group said it was: they are offering "*serviços*". To show the contrast, MU members felt uncomfortable with the term "*usuárias*", as they discussed the creation of a center to offer help to women victims of domestic violence. Jokingly, one of its leaders said it sounded like "*protozoárias*" (protozoans.) F&S professionalism is also reflected in its streamlined logo, which is its acronym and a woman sign.

Out of the initial clinic project grew a number of other activities such as research, international networking and lobbying, and training of health professionals. As its two leaders mentioned "the clinic is still a very important reference for us. Very useful in terms of producing new practices" and "before [our] profile was more centered on the clinic," or "the clinic is still a priority." Two members explicitly recognized the change from direct services to "*formação*" (training). Sandra said: What has changed is that "the training aspect came in. Research and political articulation came in." Rosemeire argued that all these other activities of F&S still revolved around the clinic itself. Rachel argued that all activities received equal priority but that it is now necessary to integrate the visits within research projects to be able to maintain the visits. Indeed I learned later that it was almost impossible to obtain financing for the clinic anymore so that they actually need to link it to research in order to obtain financing.

Working for larger social change tends to be secondary in the discourse of most F&S members to the more concrete goal of the improvement of health care for women and in



particular of replicating the experience in the public health sector,<sup>7</sup> which is clear for all members.

Influencing public policy was mentioned by both leaders of the organization as a priority for the organization. On the other hand only two members mentioned the women's movement when talking about the goals/priorities of the organization in one case in the sense of the role of F&S to "forward information to the movement" and "training of other women" who later used the experience of F&S to create their own group in other parts of the country. Rosemeire was the only one who mentioned "*ver o movimento articulado, forte*" (work for a strong, articulated movement) as important for the organization. In fact, organizing or mobilizing women is not mentioned much by F&S members during their interviews because the construction of a broad-based movement is not a top priority for F&S.

However, things are never so easily clear-cut. Looking beyond the one-time statements made during their interviews, at the group's activities, it is important to note that for several years, F&S has been leading the initiative of a feminist newsletter, produced in collaboration with a number of other feminist, mostly volunteer, organizations. The two F&S members involved with this newsletter consider it to be an important forum to bring these groups

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<sup>7</sup> When asked for the goals of the organization, 4 out of 7 mentioned the clinic first. Three did mention their contribution to larger changes in society. The desire to be working for change on a larger scale appears in the discourse of two more members in statements such as "influence the changes in the country, always in terms of women" "promote women's citizenship" "believing in the transformation of society in the long-run" expressed when asking for the goals/priorities of the organization. When asked what the ultimate goal of F&S was, 6 out of 7 agreed that it was to promote a new type of health care for women, to serve as a model for women's health care in the public service. The 7th member wanted a "a more solidary society, denouncing the injustice of gender relations."

together. But as Rosemeire put it when she introduced the organization to me on our first encounter:

Because F&S is a...a space where we deliver services, that is, we provide medical services. I mean, the majority... this is the only service in Brazil where this is done [...] the majority of women's NGOs, they have a more political role, where they organize..." Then she added "I mean, here, besides this political role --we are very active in the women's movement at the national, regional and global level [we provide services].

This shows their emphasis on national and transnational (versus local) organizing and the different meanings that can be attributed to organizing. The group wishes to promote empowerment -- and promotes it -- through the visits (*consultas*). It is mainly individual empowerment. A different relation of power is established between the "patient" and the health professional, where the woman gains control over her body by knowing it better and is able to make informed decisions. Women gain self-esteem and self-respect.

These necessarily limited presentations of MU and F&S collective identity show the difference between a movement-oriented volunteer organization and a policy-centered professionalized organization. It turns out that all of São Paulo's women's health professionalized organizations but one, SPT, are more policy-centered than movement oriented. How do we explain this correlation? I would argue, like Suzanne Staggenborg (1988), that certain practices of professionalized organizations play their part in favor of an orientation towards institutional work rather than direct action. These practices are related to the necessity of planning in professionalized organizations.

#### Planning Versus "*Colar a Realidade*" (stick to conjuncture)

Indeed, professionalized organizations have a different dynamic with regard to planning. Professionalized organizations tend to plan more and delay action, while volunteer

organizations tend to live in the heat of the moment and react to conjunctural events (*colar a realidade*). Volunteer movement organizations thrive on events and issues that motivate people to participate. They want people to participate, since people are their most valuable resource. Since they tend to be more protest-oriented, they do not fear confrontation, but on the contrary, look for "hot" issues. For example, towards the end of my interview of Tatiana at MU the phone rang. The caller's wife had died in childbirth. While on the phone she told him that the MU was going to take the case very seriously. She referred him to the maternal death committee and told him to come to MU weekly meeting that evening so that they could start organizing. She said that it was around concrete cases such as this one that things would change. She told him "*Tem que pegar quente isso*" (let's get this while it's hot). MU then sent several letters requiring explanations to various public health authorities, asked to meet and met with the hospital director, and contacted other feminist organizations for support and joint action. As Alessandra of MU puts it: "Here we do not go after anything, here things come to us" (*aqui nós não buscamos nada, aqui as coisas vêm*).

On the other hand, professionalized organizations need to plan ahead more if they are to attain their projects' objectives. Planning is part of the "expert" or professional's toolkit which emphasizes the necessity to plan before acting in order to do so more efficiently. These concerns are reflected in everyday practices and affect NGOs' mobilizing potential, which is related to the flow of information and energy between the outside and the organization. The first instance that comes to mind is the scheduling and degree of openness of meetings: MU holds its weekly meeting at the same time and the same place every week. It has been this way for several years. Anybody who wants to come in and present their issues or grievances is welcome. For example, on one occasion two prostitutes came to the meeting after they had

called MU. They reported that they and the group of prostitutes they work with were being constantly harassed by military police staff from a garrison, which is located close to where they work. Several actions were taken to provide these sex workers with legal help and to help them organize.

Obviously, such open meetings promote a strong link with the pulse of the city and to seize on immediate discontent for mobilizing. However they also disturb the original meeting agenda and are difficult to accommodate in a more structured organization. They can lead to loss of time. Action might also not always be as well thought out as it should. As Alessandra, leader of MU, puts it

It makes things more difficult because sometimes you are busy with other things, but on the other hand, you guarantee that your activities are in sync with reality, with a demand, you know? It's not something we are coming up with, that we are looking for, on the contrary, here we do not go after anything, here things come to us, you see?

Alessandra went on emphasizing the positive effects on organizing: "I think that what ensures participation, organizing, it is your willingness to always be open and receiving...receiving the demands from society."

At their mid-year evaluation meeting, MU evaluated that they had worked a lot during that semester but they had not complied with the small project they had been funded for. They blamed it on their disorganization. I understand it more as a result of their nature as a movement group which follows what was happening in the city.

At the Casa da Mulher, meetings were open to anyone interested, although they were not held as regularly as at MU and not at a fixed time. They were scheduled according to the needs of the group. During those meetings that I witnessed, nobody came with grievances. However, people came to the Casa at other times to present their situation and they would be

listened to and helped. In January 95, one of the businesses located on the same floor as the Casa was robbed, it was then decided to put up a gate with intercom at the entrance of the corridor. The leader of the Casa was particularly upset with the idea, saying that women already were intimidated to come in when the door of the Casa itself was not wide open but only ajar —she had found several women sitting in the corridor one day—. "Imagine an iron door!" she exclaimed. She feared they would not know how to use the intercom either. Despite her worries the gate was installed, with no intercom. This episode exemplifies the importance they attach to being accessible, although they were forced by adverse circumstances (they share the premises with three small businesses).

In both NGOs I worked with, a considerable effort is being made to define and plan activities. At SPT this takes the form of a series of meetings at the beginning of each year and a written document called "*plano de trabalho*" (work plan). This is in part as a response to the preferences of financing agencies. I recall, from the earlier chapter, Marina of SPT saying that NGOs work with the logic of projects which define deadlines and specific responsibilities. She ended with "and your work is not necessarily guided by conjunctural emergencies" (*e, não necessariamente, você toca seu trabalho pelas emergências conjunturais.*) As a result, NGOs are less responsive to the current conjuncture. Marina gives a concrete example of this trade-off:

So, for example, we decided that for two years we will lead a campaign against, not against but for, cancer prevention in the Eastern Periphery. Memisa decides to finance this activity and during two years you are going to make this happen. In the meantime, the Health Movement has a bunch of things to do, but you stay there, in this little corner where you decided you were going to launch a two-year campaign.

Returning to the issue of the team meetings, they are not open<sup>8</sup> in the two professionalized organizations. This reflects an effort to control their "productivity" and go along with their planning.<sup>9</sup> Similarly in both NGOs, phone calls are usually filtered and directed by a receptionist/secretary before getting to the appropriate technical staff members. If this allows greater respect for whatever goals have been set for the organization, it also constrains the flow of information and energy with the local, outside world, and restricts the possibility of seizing on issues which might mobilize people.

### Conflicting Time Schedules

Another constraining factor on mobilizing/organizing activities on the part of NGOs, stemming from their organizational form, is that volunteer groups function at night and on the week-end, when their members are not at work, while NGOs function on week days, mainly from 9-5. The technical staff has a fairly flexible schedule to accommodate individual needs such as bringing children to school, etc. --which is only fitting in a feminist organization and reflects the women-sensitive "gendered" organization of time called for by Goetz (1997). It also compensates for the week-end and evening activities some members need to engage in as a function of their work either in coalition work or

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<sup>8</sup> An old time member of the movement one day confided "that the women in the NGOs were all her friends, they had militated together a lot and slept in each others' house. But now she needed to make an appointment with them to talk to them and they would not accept her in the meeting of the NGO unless it was a special meeting."

<sup>9</sup> Another issue involved is that NGOs show greater cautiousness in projecting a positive image because they simply have more to lose than volunteer organizations. Their reputation is essential in securing future funding.

with neighborhood women's groups.<sup>10</sup> As a result of complaints by volunteer activists a number of coalition activities are now held at favorable times for volunteer activists.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, the fact remains that professionalized activists show resistance at organizing activities on the week-end, or in the evenings, which is understandable since they dedicate their whole week to such activities as well. It is hard even for extremely movement-oriented professionalized activists such as Sara from SPT, who confided in an informal conversation that she is tired of working on Sundays. Her daughter had told her one Sunday: "I want you to stay with me, not to take me to work with you."

### "Feminism of the Other"

Internally, the dynamic of NGOs differs from many movement organizations in that while movements often consider the growth of their own membership to be essential, the possibility of membership in NGOs is restricted by professional and financial criteria. Here again Carroll's (1992) distinction between membership and support organizations is useful.

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<sup>10</sup> Based on the weekly planners I asked members of NGOs and volunteer groups to fill out (see chapter 3), it turns out that for that particular week, one NGO member worked on that particular Saturday, while all three members of MU who turned in their *'planilhas'* had activities both on Saturday and Sunday, and one member of CM had activities on that Saturday. Similarly, all three MU members worked in the evenings (a total of 11 nights) and two members of CM worked in the evenings (a total of 3 nights). The bulk of the input of NGO members was during week days. In the case of SPT one person worked one night, and for F&S one member worked three evenings because a report was due. Four members of the volunteer groups also put in a considerable amount of time in movement activities during the week days because their salaried activities allow them flexibility or because they do not have paid employment. I believe that this week underrepresents SPT's and CM's work on week-ends.

<sup>11</sup> Fúlvia, a volunteer activist, recalled that when she first came to São Paulo, many meetings were held in the afternoon but she refused to go and insisted they be held in the evening or on the week-end. It has been an "tiring battle."

However, as we will see in the following chapter, the "supporting" dimension of NGOs in São Paulo is shrinking while their advocacy role is gaining strength. The difference in membership strategies appears clearly in the emphasis on enlisting and gaining people to the group at MU or the Casa, as I have mentioned earlier, which is not present at F&S or SPT. Integrating new members has always been a challenge for feminist organizations, as Marina of SPT once noted, especially if the group has been around for some time. The groups' homogeneity and affirmed core collective identity get in the way. However, in the case of NGOs, these difficulties are aggravated because new members can only join if the necessary funds are available and if potential members fit the job description as well as the collective identity of the organization. In lean years such as the ones now lived by Latin American NGOs, NGOs are at best limited in their hiring possibilities.

One way to bypass this problem would be to incorporate volunteers in NGOs. SPT and F&S, as well as most feminist NGOs in São Paulo and indeed throughout Brazil (see Table 2-1), do not work with volunteers, mostly out of a desire to be equitable. Moreover, tensions between volunteers and professionalized staff are to be expected and have been noted in other contexts (Kleidman 1994). One NGO member also expressed the fear the organization had of being sued by volunteers if they claimed that they had worked for a number of months without receiving any salary. Apparently, there are some provisions in the Brazilian legal system for such cases. As a result, it has become more difficult for newcomers to gain the necessary experience to create their own organization. In that sense the organizational form of NGOs does not facilitate the increase in the number of persons involved in the feminist movement. On the other hand, they have contributed greatly to the dissemination of the ideas of the movement and to the elaboration of policies more favorable to gender equity.



Another dimension of the distinction between membership and support/advocacy organization is that NGOs are mostly engaging in feminism for the other (to use Teresa Caldeira's phrase "*o feminismo da outra*" with a twist). They do not organize activities focused on their members' personal needs and well-being, unlike volunteer groups. For example, MU organized a series of workshops on menopause when it became of interest to several of its members. The course was given by a feminist medical doctor and a corporal therapist (*terapeuta corporal*), and functioned as group therapy as well. At the Casa da Mulher, biodance classes are offered every other week for whoever is interested. Three members of the Coordination take part regularly in this activity.

Over the course of the year I spent with F&S and SPT I did not observe any such activity for the members of the group. On the other hand, there is professional recycling ('*recyclagem*') meant to update staff on current issues. At F&S, a lecture was given by a professor from a local university on contraception and AIDS. Similarly, SPT had asked Marina, who deals with theoretical issues of gender and race, to write a text on these issues so that they could discuss it collectively. In other words, NGOs emphasize the strategy dimension of the movement more than its identity dimension. They have a limited internal focus.

### Conclusion

A number of organizational practices result from professionalization and its correlated emphasis on planning: these are conflicting hours of operation with popular movements and volunteer activists, limited growth of the organization itself, filtering of information, structure not conducive to seizing on potential mobilizing events,

understandable fatigue and resistance on the part of staff to work outside of regular business hours. These practices alter the links of professionalized organizations to their larger local constituency, as well as their potential and willingness to mobilize and rely on direct action. On the other hand, they facilitate interaction with and lobbying of institutional political actors such as governmental and international agencies.

The Brazilian women's movement case thus support Suzanne Staggenborg's claim that "professionalized leaders and formalized social movement organizations stimulate the use of institutionalized tactics" (1988:585). She showed, in her study of the professionalization of the US pro-choice movement, that formalized organizations prefer to engage in institutionalized tactics because their structure allows them to (on-going contact is possible through administrative staff, working hours are similar, and division of labor). On the other hand, formalized organizations are also likely to like working in the institutional arena better than to employ direct-action tactics because it is more compatible with regular working hours, can be scheduled in advance, planned, and expenses can also be planned.

However, the push of practices linked to professionalization and formalization do not explain fully the change in strategies from direct action to institutionalized work. Agency and active choice are also part of the story. The best proof is that SPT, despite its level of formalization and professionalization, has retained a strong ideological inclination towards mobilizing and direct action politics (mobilizing others) --with some restrictions as we will discuss in following chapter which show that the pressure is great indeed --.

This takes us back to the broader structure of political opportunity in Brazilian and international political life discussed in chapter 3, as well as to the experience of feminists in state agencies, which have made institutional work more appealing to activists (although

not to all) and to donor agencies who are now encouraging such an approach.

Staggenborg similarly noted an increased professionalization and formalization when the movement was pushed into institutionalized arenas by changing political conditions (namely the legalization of abortion in 1973).

Indeed there is a feedback loop between organizational practices and the more ideational side of the collective identity of a group. As Michael Jamison puts it: "organizational patterns and ideas are intertwined and share deeper roots" (1985:487). Where the influence of practices might be felt more decisively is once this course of institutional work has been chosen. Indeed, professionalization and formalization are likely to set organizational maintenance goals, since members from then on will depend on the organization for their livelihood, which might make difficult a return to more movement-oriented direct action tactics. The next two chapters will examine the consequences of these tactical changes in the work done by feminist support groups with neighborhood women and at the national and international level and for the deepening and gendering of democracy in Brazil.

N - So how do you consider the work you do for Sande? Is it activism? Is it work? both?

**Several voices** - It is both... (Lilia) it's a ton of work! (laughter) and activism...(somebody) It is both...(Dora) I think that we work a lot in the perspective of, I don't know if it is to become more professional, but that we can guarantee these things that we are missing... that everybody needs...a health insurance...to be more efficient, to continue to improve our competence but still thinking and doing things in which we believe.[Dora finds it difficult to deal with the lack of efficiency at times but said] This is a chosen lifestyle which allows you to develop your ideas [...]

**Nadia** - I, in particular, I see it as ...that I am contributing for something important, otherwise I would not be here at this time [it was 9 p.m.].

N - Indeed.... [Laughter from everybody]

**Nadia** - I think that...I wanted to add that... we are not going to leave it with this impression of sadness, of heaviness, that our work is not paid for, that it does not provide the rights that we would like, because I think that the people who are here, in a certain sense, they...they took part in very difficult moments of the country [...] They gave the larger part of their lives to contribute to social change in our country. I mean, I think that Edimeire, the management [*direção*] of this institution, of other institutions, myself and other people here, they worked without earning nothing, left their families, right?. So it is not the money which...today is the major...I mean, for me working at the city-hall [Prefeitura] and here at the same time and on week-ends, it is an issue of principles, you know... of political choice... I would like to see humanity go forward. So I think...to be here means that I am realizing my ideal of change for society, of evolution for humanity, to collaborate in peace.

**Dora** - It is just too beautiful [laughter from everybody]. [...]

**Lilia** - I think that it is a job (Interruption of Edimeire: "a highly socially relevant job") I think... in a certain way I deliver a service, that's what we do here. Because...Now the way we do it is what is going to give... the idea of what type of service I am delivering. For example, I do...I have to work 20 hours. So it would be a job issue, pure and simple. I go there, I go give a workshop [...] we exchange ideas. My 20 hours are up. Because it is a thing which has to be done...it is something that needs to be done and it is a job we are doing, financed by I don't know whom, but it is a thing we have decided to do, an educational program. Now, what is the perspective of this program, how much time I am going to spend on it, in what way I am going to complete it, what are the politics behind it, what is my idea of it, what are my ideals [...] This is where a different level, a different quality comes in. But I think that it is a highly socially relevant job (laughter of Lilia).

Figure 5-1: Sande members' definition of their activities

## CHAPTER 6

### ENCOUNTERS AND MISENCOUNTERS: "CITY" AND "NEIGHBORHOOD" FEMINISMS

Chandra Mohanty (1991) warned Western feminists against assuming a unitary "third world woman", thus lumping all third world women in a singular category, which would ignore their individuality and experience, as well as differences in terms of race, class, age etc. Differences of race, class, sexual orientation and age between women can hardly be ignored and are reflected in the Brazilian women's movement. In Brazil, these differences have been acknowledged by movement activists and outside observers alike (Alvarez 1990; Citeli 1994; Soares et al. 1995; Sternbach et al 1992).

In this chapter I will focus on the relations between middle class feminists, usually of European descent, and neighborhood women from São Paulo's poor periphery who most often have some African ancestry. Hence differences in both life conditions and ethnicity/race are considered. In the past, neighborhood women from these poor sectors of the city tended to reject the label "feminist" and insisted on their "feminine" identity. Today there is still certainly a resistance to the "f" word. These women see themselves differently from the *"feministas da cidade"* (the feminists from the city). However, some neighborhood women and indeed some neighborhood women's organizations have come to adopt feminism as their own and redefine it. Some of these women and groups are now active in feminist movement-wide activities and networks. This broadening of the movement is a noteworthy achievement of Brazilian feminists

and contributes greatly to the democratic potential of the movement. However, it is not without tensions, some of which will be addressed in this chapter.

In the line of E. P. Thompson (1966), I define class both in material and cultural terms. In part this is because the boundary between what we consider as the economy and what we consider as the social/cultural realm is not clearly demarcated, as interpretive anthropologists, among others, have demonstrated (e.g. Robben 1989). But also because all economic practices contain cultural components, while cultural practices also have real material --read economic-- consequences (Roseberry 1984).

Bourdieu's notion of *habitus* helps specify the relationship between material "objective" conditions and cultural practices for a given group or 'class'. Indeed, although groups or classes in a differentiated society share a number of values, beliefs and practices, each also develops its own set of practices. As Brazilian anthropologist Roberto Da Matta puts it "it is known who is rich and who is poor by behavior and lifestyle" (1995:20) even within the same neighborhood.

According to Bourdieu, this is because "the dispositions durably inculcated by the possibilities and impossibilities, freedoms and necessities, opportunities and prohibitions inscribed in the objective conditions generate dispositions [*habitus*] objectively compatible with these conditions and in a sense pre-adapted to their demands" (Bourdieu 1990:54). Members of a same group have similar histories and experiences so that their individual *habitus* reflects or expresses the class or group *habitus* (ibid:59). Obviously, individual variation exists: individuals are in a relationship of "homology, that is, of 'diversity within homogeneity'" (ibid:60).

The contention that different ethnic groups have different cultural practices is usually more easily accepted, maybe too easily. Unfortunately, I have never lived in the Northeast of Brazil where many of the neighborhood women come from, so that it is difficult for me to tease

out what practices are related to people's ethnic versus class background. In fact, representations of what it means to be poor often conjure up images of Northeastern migrants, hence often of African and indigenous descent. In objective terms, the majority of the poor have some African ancestry. This conflation of class and race at the level of representations and objective conditions has been noted for the US as well (Cousins 1996; Ortner 1996).

The first section of this chapter addresses the tensions that such differences in culture/class create among feminists and the challenges they pose to the participation of neighborhood women in movement-wide fora such as the Rede. The second section shows that despite the inclusion, in the feminist movement, of a number of popular feminists, middle class feminist groups' involvement with neighborhood women in São Paulo's periphery has diminished. The new formally democratic regime has certainly changed the possibilities and constraints of NGO and social movement politics and altered the relationships between the two and their preferred strategies. However, the specificity of the movement in São Paulo, notably its longevity and its professionalization, as well as popular feminists' perception of their possibilities and limitations need to be taken into consideration. Finally, I will consider how the pre-defined character of research and pilot projects, a working tool for NGOs, might contribute to the difficulties NGOs are experiencing in bringing together neighborhood women's groups for their completion, hence contributing to the low ebb of mobilization in neighborhoods.

### How Different Are Neighborhood Women?

I interviewed 18 women members of neighborhood women's groups which received support from the "city" feminist groups (professionalized or volunteer) I was working with. Eight women were members of Movimento Mulher e Saúde, a group which received support

from SPT (F&S still offers sporadic but no long term support to neighborhood groups). Six women belonged to the neighborhood nuclei of Mulheres Unidas, while another 4 women participate in the activities organized by the Casa da Mulher (for a total of 10 women receiving support from volunteer groups).

I will present the socioeconomic profile of the neighborhood women I interviewed before getting to the cultural elements that distinguish them from "the feminists from the city". Starting with ethnic identity, among the 18 grassroots women I interviewed, only six considered themselves as "*branca*" (white), three identified themselves as "*negra*" or "*preta*" (black) but nine considered themselves of mixed ancestry. This is significantly different from the ethnic make-up of feminist support groups. It is also consistent with the fact that large numbers of migrants from the Northeast of Brazil live in the periphery of São Paulo and that, historically, the Northeast of Brazil has a large population of people of African descent.

In terms of occupation, 9 of these 18 women worked or are currently working for the public sector, of which 6 in the public health system (See Table 6-1). 5 are housewives, two of which are home seamstresses on the side. Two women work consistently as seamstresses, while another 2 opened small businesses. These women's incomes tend to be lower than that of middle class feminists, although it is not always the case. As far as education is concerned, only two of these women have studied beyond high school, while the large majority (eleven) have completed elementary school (*primeiro grau*). A number of them have started studying again after joining the movement.

An element which was very present in neighborhood women's understanding of the differences between themselves and middle class feminists is the place where they live. A strong distinction is made between those who live in the *bairro* (the neighborhood) and those who live



Table 6-1: Socioeconomic Profile and Political Participation of Neighborhood Activists

Organization	Age	Race	Occupation	Hd Income	Education	Marital status	# of children	Place Origin	Date joined	Started activism	Political Party
Casa da Mulher	48	M	restaurant owner	1,500	2	Married	4	SP	1987	1987	PT
Casa da Mulher	50	E	housewife / embroidery	1,500	2	Married	4	SP int.	1983	1983	PT
Casa da Mulher	42	M	housewife	2,000	1+	Married	3	Minas	1989	70s	PT
Casa da Mulher	67	E	housewife	700	2	Married	2	SP int.	1985	70s	PT
Movimento Mulher e Saude	47	E	hospital attendant	* 400	2	Cons. union	1	SP int.	1975	70s	PT
Movimento Mulher e Saude	47	M	housewife (teacher)	1,000	1*	Married	4	Minas	1980	70s	PT
Movimento Mulher e Saude	44	A	housewife/seamstress	N/A	N/A	Married	2	Bahia	1981	1981	PT
Movimento Mulher e Saude	47	E	sell cosmetics/seamstress	1,000	2	Married	4	SP int.	1979	1979	PT
Movimento Mulher e Saude	46	A	Nurse	* 1,300	4	Single	4	SP	1992	1992	none
Movimento Mulher e Saude	45	M	Seamstress/ domestic work	400	1*	Separated	4	Paraiba	1989	1981	PT
Movimento Mulher e Saude	55	E	seller (hospital attend.)	300	2	Widow	1	R.G. Sul	1993	1993	none
Movimento Mulher e Saude	36	M	hospital attendant	* 480	2	Cons. union	1	SP	1977	70s	PT
Mulheres Unidas	41	M	daycare attendant	430	1*	Married	3	Minas	1981	70s	PC do B*
Mulheres Unidas	47	M	hospital attendant/ restaurant	1,000	2	Married	3	SP int.	1977	70s	PSDB
Mulheres Unidas	41	A	Teacher	530	4	Married	2	SP	1988	1988	PT
Mulheres Unidas	29	E	hospital attendant	300	1+	Cons. union	3	Parana	1986	1986	PC do B*
Mulheres Unidas	39	M	student inspector	250	2	Single	3	Minas	1982	70s	PC do B*
Mulheres Unidas	50	M	bar owner	N/A	N/A	Widowed	9	Bolivia	1988	1987	none

Notes: Race: A: African descent; M: Mixed descent; E: European descent; As: Asian -- Household income: \*: Individual income -- Education: 1: Elementary school; 2: Middle school; 3: High school; 4: University; + has completed more than the stipulated level; \* Studying in special adult program to complete middle school -- Political party: \* No longer a member

in the *cidade* (the city), the wealthier part of São Paulo. As Teresa Citeli (1994) argues, the class element is compounded by a feeling that "city" feminists are not present in the day-to-day struggle they are waging.

### Cultural Differences

In the case of the Brazilian women's movement, differences linked to life conditions are expressed, at times dramatically, in language and in practices, in an emphasis on the collective versus the individual. Neighborhood and "City" women also differ in their relation to men, as well as to God and the Catholic Church. Consequently, they also differ in terms of interests and needs, reviving the never quenched issue of the "general" (needs of both men and women of the popular classes) versus "the specific" (needs of women), and the newer issue of local versus national/international strategies of social change.

The language rift between popular and middle class educated feminists came best to the fore when a neighborhood feminist shared her feelings about the meetings of the *Rede* that had taken place in Rio de Janeiro: "*as pessoas buscam formas de se expressar [...] usam palavras que nem são no dicionário*" (people search for ways to express themselves [...] they use words that are not even in the dictionary". And this activist is not a new-comer to the feminist movement either! bel hooks (1984) emphasized the importance of modifying our vocabulary and sentence structure, which does not mean "talking down" either, when addressing a different public, in part to get around differences in literacy and formal education levels.

Differences in practices go down to the minute details of everyday life which are reflections of the power differential between classes. To give an example, Nadia (Movimento Mulher e Saúde, hereafter MMS) recounted how ill-at-ease she had felt at dinners in feminist

meetings because she, like most people living in the periphery of São Paulo, is used to eating with a spoon, rather than with a fork and knife. Differences are also obvious in the way women dress, comb their hair, or look at others. Such seemingly trivial practices are part of the social capital of individuals which translates in material benefits, such as better employment, and materializes power differentials between classes (Bourgois 1995). They also mark their difference and become a source of self-consciousness and uneasiness when they come together.

Brazilian anthropologists have noted that popular classes have a sociability based on the principle of reciprocity (*a dívida*) and religiosity (Fernandes 1994), a relational/hierarchical worldview (Da Matta 1995). Da Matta believes that he, a Brazilian intellectual, shares this relational worldview with his fellow Brazilians, while Fernandes argues that certain sectors of the Brazilian population, in particular NGOs and social movements have found themselves somewhat cut off from the masses of the people because of their more individualistic, secularist culture<sup>1</sup> (Fernandes 1994:142). Indeed, if popular movements, including neighborhood women's groups, have adopted some of the modernist vision, in particular the logic of equality and participation, they do not seem to have completely accepted that of individualism, or even of universalistic rationalism. Indeed the type of rights popular movements struggle for are "basically collective (a claim made by a community, for the whole of its members); they do not aim, therefore, at the expansion of individual rights" (Citeli 1994:17). For Teresa Citeli this is one of the reasons why the women in popular movements such as the Health Movement of the Eastern Periphery (MSZL) are so ambivalent towards feminism and its notion of reproductive

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<sup>1</sup> Recall Leilah Landim's contention that "NGOs bring to popular groups the assumptions of a universalist rationalism, the logic of equality, autonomy, individualism, participation, and dialogue - the logic of citizenship" (1993a:219).

rights. This emphasis on the collective was reflected in the practices of the groups I visited. For example, my first contact with neighborhood groups was often with the whole group or at least with several of its members.

Neighborhood women are also weary of the alleged anti-men stance of feminists, which they cannot and do not want to adopt, and see as a threat to their feminine identity.<sup>2</sup> The trajectory of Dalva, a popular movement activist now active on women's health issues, is quite representative of a number of women. She started in a Christian-based community (CEBs) and participated in her community struggles to obtain water, electricity and sanitation in her neighborhood. She then entered the health movement some 17 years ago. Two years ago, she joined Movimento Mulher e Saúde. Here is what she has to say about feminism:

Something I had doubts about was about joining this commission. I was mixing up the women's commission, with the feminists. Sometimes I saw the feminists as being very radical [...] Being a member of the women's commission, does it mean being a feminist? I don't want to be one of these feminists, no. I want to be feminine. Not these feminists so... I don't know...so [...] I don't know if you know what I want to say. So...that women have to work alongside men. The issue of respect, that men have for women [...] since you want to have your rights, here they are, be equal with men. And so, we are treated with much disrespect. We are not treated as women anymore.

The fact that the progressive church and CEBs have played an important part in promoting the organization of popular movements, and hence of neighborhood women, is now well-established (Bruneau and Hewitt 1992, Doimo 1995), although the extent to which they led to people's politicization is still debated (Burdick 1992). The conservative turn-around of the international Catholic Church since the nomination of Pope John Paul II has also affected

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<sup>2</sup> This perceived threat to their identity is, according to political scientist Celia Pinto (1994), the most likely reason for the limited acceptance of feminism by women in society at large.

CEBs negatively throughout Latin America.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, CEBs have definitely been essential in the lives of the neighborhood women in the periphery of São Paulo (Jacobi 1983) and in particular of the groups I worked with. However, even the progressive Church has only been willing to go so far; as women have affirmed certain feminist positions, in particular with regard to abortion or contraception, they have entered into conflict with the Church and have significantly curtailed their ties to it or have been ostracized from it (Drogus 1992).

Teresa Citeli (1994) argues that believing in God or not, is an important difference between feminists and neighborhood women active in popular movements. She shows that neighborhood women believe that to be a feminist you have to be an atheist. She also argues that the strong anti-homosexual sentiments of neighborhood women --partly linked to their connection to the Church-- which I have also witnessed, is another divider with the "city" feminists, for whom homosexuality among women is now fairly well-accepted. This takes us back to Dalva's ideas of what constitute proper feminine behavior and identity.

#### Differences in Interests and Needs<sup>4</sup>

Interests and needs arise not only from an individual's positioning in the social structure, as is assumed in the Marxist-structuralist tradition, but also from that individual's experience, which includes her/his differing relationship to those who hold power. This understanding allows us to go beyond Molyneux's (1985) original distinction of practical versus

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<sup>3</sup> See Lebon 1996 for a concise review of the literature on the relationship between the church and popular movements.

<sup>4</sup> For an interesting discussion of the difference between interests and needs in the context of gender planning see Naila Kabeer (1995:294-298).

strategic gender interests, and especially beyond the assertion that practical gender interests "do not generally entail a strategic goal such as women's emancipation or gender equality" (1985: 253). Feminists have since then repeatedly shown the challenge that neighborhood women's organizing, even around issues of "practical interest" to them, poses to the established social and gendered order (Friedman et al. 1996; Lind 1992, 1997; Radcliffe and Westwood 1993; Safa 1990).

The life conditions, experience and sense of identity of neighborhood women, as well as their relations to men and to middle class white men in particular, shapes their interests and needs. For example, none of the neighborhood groups I worked with identified as a black women's group. In fact I do not know of any such group in the periphery of São Paulo, although, as I have shown, most members have some African heritage. For the most part, members were aware of racial discrimination --how could they not be!-- but they do not organize specifically around this issue and have not come to turn race into a salient self-identifying element. As a result, or maybe because of my own blind spots, issues that are dividing Afro-Brazilian from Euro-Brazilian feminists "from the city," such as sterilization (see Roland 1995; Geledés 1991), did not surface in the neighborhoods. On the other hand, issues related to life conditions, in which the role played by racial discrimination cannot be underestimated, came prominently to the fore.

Compared with groups "from the city", the neighborhood women and popular feminists I worked with clearly put more emphasis on issues that affect both low-income women and men, such as the implementation of the SUS, the national universal healthcare system, and against the privatization of the municipal healthcare system (PAS). They emphasize the "general". They were more adamant in criticizing the neoliberal policies of the

government than most NGOs. Yet, they are very aware of some of their needs and interests as women ("the specific"). For example, they are now fighting for better, or often minimum, gynecological care in hospitals (Movimento Mulher e Saúde). Or they are concerned about violence against women and want to set up a center/shelter for women (Grupo de Mulheres da Zona Leste). They want and need to work on both sets of issues simultaneously.

Neighborhood women's interests also tend to be more local. Very few neighborhood women got involved with the preparation of the Beijing conference. They chose to focus their energy on the local level. One woman did participate in a few meetings of the Forum of preparation for Beijing, and six went to the national conference in Rio in June 95 but none went to Beijing. On the other hand, during that same year, Movimento Mulher e Saúde was involved with fighting the PAS, the conservative mayor's plan to privatize the municipal health care system, and with raising women's awareness of the need for preventive exams against gynecological cancer and for denouncing public negligence in the healthcare system.

The neighborhood groups involved with Mulheres Unidas for their part, were not thrilled at first to discuss the Beijing conference, although Tatiana spared no effort to make it as relevant to their lives as possible. Eventually, as Tatiana was relating the demonstrations against violence against women, she struck the right cord: one woman became emphatic about the need to fight domestic violence that was rampant in their neighborhood.

To sum it up, popular feminists express themselves differently and have less cultural capital than feminists from the city. They tend to be more collectively oriented and more concerned with bridging women's specific issues with issues that affect both men and women of the popular classes, who are also largely of African descent. They care about international feminist politics to the extent that they have some relevance to their own realities.

### When Diversity Means Trouble

With the years, popular feminists have started to participate in instances and forums, such as the Rede, which were earlier the preserve of middle class educated feminists. Albertina Costa, long-time feminist scholar, reminded me I should not lose sight of this important achievement of the movement while analyzing the problems that this diversity brought about. I was grateful for this cheerful reminder, as I had come out of a meeting of the Rede Feminista somewhat grim and pessimistic. It is all the more remarkable an achievement for the Rede to offer this forum of interaction in that exactly these difficulties in dealing with this diversity have contributed to the decline of national *Encontros*, at least according to Nara. She said "In the feminist *Encontros*, the people participating changed [i.e. more neighborhood women are now coming] and nobody wants to change the dynamic of the Feminist *Encontros*. They prefer putting an end to the Feminist *Encontros*, to say that they do not have a role to play anymore than to change the dynamic to accommodate the reality of neighborhood women" (See also Sternbach et al. 1992).

So, differences in practices and interests/needs lead to difficulties when women come together for joint actions, creating real challenges in terms of participation and inclusion of popular feminist voices in the movement. Considering the power and social capital differential between educated, middle class women and their neighborhood "sisters", it seems that neighborhood women are the ones who have to make most of the journey for the encounter. This appeared particularly clearly in the annual meeting of the Rede.

The Rede held its annual meeting in Rio de Janeiro from March 29 until April 3, 1995. This annual meeting was preceded by a debate concerning the SUS, the national project for a



universal and integrated health system. During the meeting, about 70 women, representing the 70 groups then members of the Network, came together to evaluate the work done during the past year, to discuss the broad lines of action for the coming year and to discuss the structure of the network itself. While the "*estrelas*" (stars) of the movement, as the leaders are often referred to, took center stage, there was much discontent backstage among neighborhood women.

A first motive for dissatisfaction was the locale chosen for the meeting, the Hotel Gloria, one of the oldest luxury hotels in Rio. At a time when all groups, including the Rede, were complaining of financial difficulties, popular feminists could not understand why the 5-day meeting took place in such an expensive facility as opposed to school facilities, where popular movements have their meetings. Lodging was provided for all participants, including me, for which I wish to thank the Executive Secretariat.

When I transmitted these comments to a meeting organizer, she explained that the Hotel offered interesting package deals for conventions, so that the rates were not as high as the women thought. The organizing committee wanted to offer the women the experience of staying in such a place, with all the comfort it offers, taking them away from their everyday difficulties, and the possibility to relax after long meeting hours. Moreover, this is a hotel which NGOs have traditionally used in the past, as for the Parallel Forum of UNCED in 1992. However, what it boiled down to, in her analysis, was a class conflict:

But this is a problem do you know why Nathalie? Because when we organize a meeting in a location which is not good, people say "it's only because it is a meeting with grassroots women that they put us in this place." When we choose a good place, people say that we are wasting money [...] So there is...something critical within the movement...and the class struggle...is reflected in each class context, do you understand?

Having the necessary comfort is probably particularly important for professionalized women who spend much of their time in such meetings and who consider it as "work". Besides, these meetings are genuinely tiring, with a tight schedule and numerous extra-agenda activities in the evenings.

Money was not the only issue involved. Popular feminists felt inhibited and intimidated by this alien and impressive milieu as well as by the language used by "the powerful women" as a member of the Catholics for Free Choice noted. The unease of neighborhood women was epitomized to me by the following incident. As I was interviewing Isabella, a key member of the Rede, during her lunch break, Maria, a midwife from a rural area in the northern state of Maranhão, came to ask her to read a note she had written and wanted to share with the others in the plenary session. Isabella replied gently that Maria should read it personally. Maria then said that she counted on Isabella to provide her with some space during the afternoon. Isabella never got around to actually doing it back in the meeting room although she had agreed in all sincerity, I believe. Maria did not intervene. Her voice remained silent.

The tensions surfacing at the national level in the Rio meeting were also present in the meetings of the Sao Paulo regional chapter of the *Rede*, although they are attenuated by the fact that these women have worked together for several years now. Nevertheless, here are my notes about one meeting which was particularly striking because it pushed these tendencies to an extreme. They read: "A. did not open her mouth during the whole session. B. was shaking when she first talked, --I was sitting next to her-- most of the dialogue was between C., D. and E. with interventions from F. and G." C. D. and E. belong to well-established NGOs, F. and G. are academic feminists, while A. and B. are members of neighborhood feminist groups.

### Get to the Point: Time Constraints Hinder Participation

In situations where an heterogeneous group of women are brought together, it is especially important to ensure practices that favor participation of all. Unfortunately, these practices, which feminists have perfected in innumerable workshops, are time-consuming, so they clash with the time and resource constraints the groups, and the *Rede* in this case, are now facing.

As a result only a limited number of women expressed themselves at the Rede meeting. Based on my fieldnotes about 25 women talked out of 72 present for the first afternoon and the same names appeared again and again (I might have missed a few speakers). There is nothing unusual about this. A veteran feminist recalled that there have always been women who spoke more than others. The difference, she said, is that, in the past, this issue was discussed and worked on. Maybe more worrisome are incidents such as the following: "A neighborhood woman from the *Fórum de Mulheres de Niteroi* started talking about the SUS and was told that it was not the time to talk about this issue. She never opened her mouth again" [fieldnotes]. Although it is true that the SUS was not on the agenda at the time, this event set a bad precedent for the women from smaller groups who might not feel so comfortable talking in public. A member of Catholics for Free Choice noted that time was indeed an ever present constraint on the discussion.

### "Big Groups" and "Small Groups"

During the Encontro, the chairs were organized in the shape of a radiating circle. The circle denoted the importance the organizers were putting on nonhierarchical forms of

interaction (as opposed to a panel facing rows of listeners). Yet, this was a circle with an expectable spin. Most of the more prominent feminists, who participated in the discussions, were sitting in the central circle. It had not been planned that way, it just happened, reflecting the natural reality of power differences within the movement.

This reality is not so much to the taste of some women from the "smaller groups", as a São Paulo popular feminist put it. She felt that they were not given enough attention and that the "grande grupos" (large groups) obtain resources for the meeting by "using the small groups": the *Rede* gives the names of all the groups that participate in order to bolster its legitimacy but the small groups do not have a say in the decision-making. According to this woman, this year's meeting had been worse than other years' in terms of lack of space for "smaller groups" to express themselves. Her organization's evaluation of the situation was so negative that for a moment they even considered leaving the Network. In a more constructive move, the São Paulo neighborhood groups decided to meet to network (*articular*) and to strengthen their voice within the *Rede*.

The communication problem is indeed complicated because if the "smaller groups" did speak up, I believe the others would listen. According to the neighborhood women who raised these critiques, my interpretation is somewhat naive because the heart of the problem is the desire of the "powerful women" to retain their power.

### The Rule of Homogamy

Meetings such as the annual meeting of the *Rede* are important moments for networking and getting to know each other. Such informal activities should help mitigate tensions through "the reduction of social distances which reduces conflict and generates

conciliation" (Telles 1994:47). Yet, mixing up different groups proved difficult. The principle of homogamy held sway mostly. Bourdieu defines homogamy as "the paradigm of all the 'choices' through which the *habitus* tends to favor experiences likely to reinforce it" because it searches to "protect itself from crisis and critical challenges by providing itself with a milieu to which it is as pre-adapted as possible" (1990:61). I would argue that it is really people, and not *habitus*, who chose this or that course of action, which results in things like spatial segregation, avoidance of "bad company" or of "unsuitable books." There is a measure of "gut reaction" difficult to control and to a certain extent nonconscious, as Bourdieu argues, but there is also a measure of deliberate choice.

On two occasions, the discomfort created by the interaction between women of different class cultures was obvious. In one case, I was having dinner with 4 or 5 academic feminists during the national meeting of Brazilian women in preparation for the Beijing conference. As we were starting our meal, a group of women from São Paulo's Eastern Periphery walked in. I knew these women very well. I sensed that some of the feminist scholars present were not really up to having the women sit at our table. They did not know these women and their presence would change the nature of our conversation and level of discourse. I felt uncomfortable, not wanting to disown my friends from the Eastern periphery and aware of the awkward situation but still wanting to continue the conversation I was sharing with my colleagues. The situation was solved by the fact that the neighborhood women did not smoke and sat at another table close by.

The difficult relations of academic feminists with the rest of the movement are notorious and hence could explain this episode. However, another incident revealed the chasm between the "elite" of the movement and the rest. Back at the *Rede* annual meeting a large

group of women, maybe fifteen of us mostly from São Paulo, decided to eat at a pizzeria. We walked together to the restaurant which had large tables outside which could have accommodated all of us. However, a few women, all fairly well-known, university-educated, middle class and from NGOs (except for one who was an academic) wanted to eat inside. All followed inside. At that point, the 5 women sat at a small table while the rest sat at another (only one belonged to a professionalized organization). The important distinction here though is not, I believe, professionalization, but the position of these women in the "cupula do movimento" (the "top" of the movement). In practical terms, most women who are perceived as "elite," i.e. the leaders, are also professionalized. They are also well-educated and middle class since that background provides them with the necessary social capital which enables them to be perceived by the power-that-be as potential interlocutors.

This blatant schism and lack of understanding of the necessity to build solidarity, considering the importance of the symbolic act of eating together, did not go unnoticed among the women sitting at my table. One of them made a comment saying that we did not need to wait for the others to be done since it was OK for them to eat by themselves. At the moment I could not help but being appalled by this behavior, although reflecting on the issue more level-headedly I thought these women probably had important issues to discuss and hence did not want to be chatting with the others, or maybe did not want the others to interfere in their conversation. In any case, there might be an understandable but unfortunate feeling on the part of these feminists that they have little to learn from women who have less education or who are newcomers to the movement. The very same issue was raised regarding the *Encontros* in which *feministas históricas* (long time feminists) expressed being "tired of having to reinvent

the wheel' each time a new woman became interested in feminism" (Sternbach et al. 1992: 228).

To sum it up, the constraints of time and resources and concerns for efficacy of professionalized groups and a natural tendency towards homogeneity are making it harder for the movement to deal with the challenges to participation posed by its increasing diversity - a diversity which should be heralded as an achievement of the feminist movement.

### Where Did All the "City" Feminists Go?

As I have already noted, the work of middle class feminists contributed to the fact that a handful of neighborhood women's groups in the periphery of São Paulo consider themselves to be feminists. Feminist NGOs have also partially substituted the role of the Church in providing these neighborhood groups with meeting space and other support. However, much work remains to be done in these neighborhoods, as women are still suffering from sexist oppression and from worsening economic times. They are in need of support for organizing around gender issues. Yet, there is no doubt that the involvement of São Paulo "city" feminists in the periphery has diminished. A similar move away from the local and broadening of spatial scale of action has been identified by Landim and Cotrim (1996) in their 1994 survey of ABONG members as a whole when compared with a survey Landim conducted in 1988 with 243 NGOs (see Table 6-2).

Table 6-2: Change in ABONG Members' Spatial Scales of Action  
(in percentage of total ABONG members)

Scale of Action	Years	
	1988	1996*
National	13.4%	40%
State	31%	47%
Municipal	—	38%
Local	55%	29%♣
N	243	145 "

Source: Landim & Cotrim (1996: xii)

Note: \* Multiple responses were accepted.

♣ Note that in 1996 only 6.9% reported working at the local level alone, against 55% in 1988 (ibid.).

" ABONG had 164 members at the time the survey was conducted (1994) and 145 responded to the questionnaire (Landim & Cotrim 1996:ix).

### A Feeling of Abandonment

I was somewhat taken aback when, early in my research, Cecília, probably one of the first popular feminists in the Eastern Zone, voiced her concern for the recent "abandonment" of neighborhood women's groups by the feminist groups from the city. She said

What we feel in the neighborhoods is this, and this is something of which we complain a lot, in a few meetings in which we have been in the women's movement, and that is that the periphery was abandoned by the organized groups or by the NGOs, that's right. So, the initiatives in the neighborhoods have been, in terms of women's issues, have been individual initiatives.

N - From neighborhood women?

Cecília - Yes. It has been from people who.. were already activists in the women's movement and who now live in the neighborhoods and who continue with these activities but isolated, more alone, you know; without the support of the organizations.

Yet, the two popular feminist entities that Cecilia participates in did benefit from the support of SPT in an effort to regroup those women who shared a popular feminist identity.

Nevertheless, Cecilia's concerns were confirmed by subsequent incidents and statements. For



example, Carolina, who belonged to MMS, reported to the group "how bad she felt because she had not found anyone to give a talk at a meeting where there would be 80 women gathered on a Sunday morning at 10 a.m. She tried to call various people but they did not want or could not do it." During her interview, Noemi (MU neighborhood nucleo) voiced her surprise at the fact that the women from MU's headquarters did not come to the Nucleo. [...] she felt it was important to travel around --three women had just been to Beijing-- but that it was also more important to do the local work. Then again, two neighborhood women who do not consider themselves feminists, whom I interviewed in the Southern periphery lamented the fact that there no longer were *Encontros* for them to go to. They said that participating in these women's meetings gave them the strength they needed to continue their daily struggle.

Some long-time volunteer feminists from the city also noticed changes in the interaction of different groups. Beatriz put it this way:

Look, the women's movement from 88 till 95, [...] I think that a lot of things changed for the best, but some changed for the worse. So, for example, in 88 you could see a much more activist intervention on the part of the leadership of the women's movement, more.. spontaneous, and much more committed. Let's say, it was something...the availability of people to do things, to conduct activities, was very strong, so the availability to exchange, between groups, even if there was a hierarchy in terms of organizational structure, of material resources between groups[...] there was a greater relation of partnership, in everyday practice. I think that it was greater than what it is today, I think that today the differentiation between groups widened quite a bit.

Alessandra compared her current difficulties in organizing workshops with a "specialist" in the periphery with past situations:

I would travel, and it wasn't only two hours! I lived over there in Campo Limpo and I was going to Itaquera, see what I mean? I brought an expert along [on some particular issue] [...] We'd get there, she gave her workshop which was a real success because she was an expert. Today, you cannot find anybody to do this. Today you have to go with your own capacity, you get there, you see what you can do. But bringing an expert along, today it is impossible, you see?

As a result, neighborhood women claim, feminists "from the city" no longer know what their life is like. In a final meeting I had with MMS Carolina argued that it was really complicated because these women who work at the national and international level "*se distanciam*" (distanced themselves) and do not know the reality lived by neighborhood women today. She said life has changed for these women over the last 10 years and it has changed for the women in the periphery as well.

As for Cristina (GMZL) the problem was that the women from the City are "*desligadas do trabalho concreto com as mulheres*" They are "no longer in touch with the concrete work done with women" and the gap between them is widening. This is a difficult moment, she added. Along the same line, Flora (Casa da Mulher) confided during her interview:

The way I see it, Nathalie, I am pretty worried because I see a greater and greater gap, I see neighborhood women who are doing really important work, which could enrich the thesis of any academic woman, they are doing things which are often left to the side. I don't think that this is good for the movement. It is going to misrepresent feminism and people love to talk about...love to say such things.

### The View from the Other Side

Looking at this issue from the vantage point of feminists "from the city," there is an acknowledgment, although not without anxiety and heartaches, of changes in their relations with neighborhood groups, both in volunteer and professionalized groups. The Casa da Mulher, on this particular issue, is really to be grouped with other popular feminist organizations because of its extreme involvement and rooting (*enraizamento*) in its peripheral neighborhood.

At Mulheres Unidas, Alessandra agreed that "before, MU was working a lot with the nuclei. MU gave a lot of importance to this work, not today but there was a time when we did." Maura also recognized the distance that has grown with neighborhood women when she acknowledged, during their semi-annual evaluation meeting, that a particular course they had organized had helped "to bring them back closer to women from the periphery." An ex-MU member who is university educated but lives in one of the poorest regions of the city also commented that feminists are very far from the everyday life of poor women. She added that she and her friend want to struggle to bring back the idea of working "com a base" (with the base), organizing it, which had been present in the 80s.

This is a difficult topic for MU's leadership, the long-timers, who feel close to neighborhood women and in Alessandra's case want to be identified as "mulher do povo" (a woman from the people). Alessandra reminded me during her interview "*alias eu sou da periferia*" (in fact, I am from the periphery). She glorified neighborhood women as when she mentioned that it was they, "*mulheres bem simples*" (women with little education), who had discovered the effects of Citotec (a common medication which was discovered to have abortifacient properties), contradicting her earlier emphasis on the importance of expert knowledge for giving good workshops. Towards the end of my stay, maybe because of some of my interventions, and in a great part because of her experience of ill-health, which required expensive treatment, Alessandra confided that she was sad because she knew this experience set her apart from neighborhood women, who never could afford the treatments.

Not all MU members share this empathy. This is a source of tension both within the head organization and with the neighborhood *nucleos*. One of the members who is more inclined to do organizing work in the periphery told me "*elas [other members] me ridiculizam*

*porque estou fazendo este tipo de trabalho. Elas falam que eu gosto de pobreza*" (They make fun of me because I do this type of work. They say that I like poverty). She recalled that some neighborhood women were hurt by the behavior of these members as they felt that the others "*sentem nojo de nós porque somos pobres*" (find us disgusting because we are poor). The voicing of such strong and bodily sentiments reveals the depth of the difference, and the almost nonconscious "visceral" distastes that exist or are thought to exist between different groups (Cassell 1996). This analysis is corroborated by the dislike that some MU members from the *núcleos* expressed towards given members of the headquarters which were at times characterized as "burguês" (bourgeois). On the other hand when I asked Noemi (MU núcleo) whether she considered Alessandra as belonging to the same "classe" (social class) as her, she answered yes without a hesitation.

As far as professionalized groups are concerned, F&S tried to understand the decline in the number of visits at their clinic and hit on the issue of dissemination of information. Ana Maria noted that she used to go and give talks in trade unions and associations in the city and she would talk about what F&S does. She has now taken up other activities which often take her away from the city and no longer gets to do this. Nobody else fulfills this role in the organization either, except for Rosimeire occasionally. The two women who do local work at F&S work in the clinic as paramedics.

For its part, SPT still has two women who work exclusively on the local level providing "*assessoria*" (support) to movements, plus another person who does local work and some national activities. A fourth person works at the State level with trade-union women. Only two of these four women were still working for SPT when I left São Paulo. One was dissatisfied with the organization and the other had to move abroad.

SPT coordinator Nara defines the changes with regard to work with the local neighborhood movements in those terms: they have gone from organizers to '*assessoria*' of organizers:

Workshops, we do less and less of those, of really basic workshops. Before, we used to do a series of 12 workshops, in fact it was something quite enormous. It was basic training really, because it was helping to create a group, so that the group continued afterwards. You'd stay there for three months doing workshops and then discussed how the group should go on. And today, the workshops we do are more within events, or they are series of fewer workshops. And we do more and more seminars, courses, courses on a particular theme and general courses [...] we try to forward a bit of what is the feminist agenda, to provide a more conceptual discussion, of what gender relations are [...] of the methodology we have been using in working with women.

This fits with the view of an activist from the Health Movement of the Eastern Periphery (MSZL) with which SPT has been working for a long time:

At first, SPT was an organization which collaborated in our struggle, which collaborated as an equal partner in our struggle, then SPT provided us with *assessoria*, and recently it has lost this capacity of support, this capacity has diminished considerably, because of the lack of staff, and because it has taken another direction, ... it has abandoned a bit this work more up close with the [health] movement, now it is producing more materials and it has specialized a bit in the women's question, so as far as the [health] movement goes, it has lost a bit of its capacity to provide support. Now on women's issues it is still an organization which has the capacity to provide support.

In a telling move, in spring 1997, SPT sold their headquarters in a peripheral neighborhood where it had been located since the 70s and moved to a more central location. The old headquarters were no longer appropriate to their needs and activities, and SPT was under severe financial constraint. The coming section will try to understand what happened to SPT and other feminist groups and NGOs.

## Looking for Explanations

### A New Political Environment

There is little doubt that the transition from a dictatorship to a formally democratic political system which, especially in the transition phase, opened channels of expression for civil society, has changed the milieu, i.e. the constraints and possibilities, of both popular movements and NGOs, allowing for a different repertoire of collective action.

Popular movements have partially shifted to a more consensual position and more involvement in institutional politics (Doimo 1995; Hochstetler 1997). The progressive church, which had been essential in weaving a fabric of potential activists for these movements, through its consciousness-raising activities, and had offered them logistical support, has now retreated or been forced back into a more traditional position. Ana Maria Doimo's work (1995) is particularly detailed on this issue. However, the Church has never been interested in seeing women organize as such, especially around issues of reproductive rights. As for other allies of popular movements, such as leftist intellectuals, many have also moved back to universities or to party politics as the regime democratized (see Doimo 1995). Among neighborhood women, I also heard expressions of fatigue (*cansaço*) at battling to no avail: it is more and more difficult to make a decent living and the political situation is going nowhere, due to the conservative local government. In terms of public health policy, the plan to privatize the municipal health system (PAS) which was successfully voted in by the municipal legislature, was a hard blow, going against the grain of what the health movement had been struggling about for more than 15 years.

The newly democratized context also necessarily changed the role of NGOs. On the one hand, they see popular movements as fairly consolidated. Their vision of what their role in neighborhoods should be has changed, as was clear for SPT. The training of trainers or *formação de multiplicadoras* has become key. SPT leadership sees their role in neighborhoods as training women who will take on their role. They no longer see themselves as organizing agents at the local level. The positive side of this development is that it drastically curtails the risks of dependence. The problem is simply that neighborhood women might not be ready.

Besides the training of trainers, there are many more possibilities to influence public policies through more traditional channels, that is party politics, the women's councils or personal contacts of political women. This means that developing a social base or a *poder de pressão* (pressure power) is no longer as crucial. Alessandra of Mulheres Unidas noted that being able to bring together a large number of women used to be considered important and powerful in the movement but this is not true today. The "weapons" are others.

In this new environment, NGOs can and want to have their own identity as social change agents, as I have discussed in chapter 3. However, as I hope to show, other processes, at the organizational and the individual levels, related to the specificity of the movement in São Paulo, notably its longevity and its professionalization, have contributed to the shift in activities of feminist groups away from the neighborhoods.

#### Specificity of the Movement in São Paulo

The feminist movement in São Paulo and in Rio de Janeiro goes back to the 70s. Contrary to other places in the country, it is now two decades old. If this is true of the movement, this is also true of its individual participants. How often do we hear "*ainda somos*

*as mesmas*" (we are still the same ones) in feminist meetings, as Cecilia remarked. The very fact that most activists are now in their 40s or older does, I believe, impact the strategies of the movement. Literally, they are getting older, and as a 30-year old feminist NGO member noted to me, they no longer have "*o pique para ficar na rua*" (the pep to take to the streets). In an extreme example, Clarisse (MU), 49, complained of problems with her legs that prevented her from going to demonstrations.

Then also with my physical difficulties, this activity which I enjoyed so much, in which I participated a lot, I mean in the streets, I have a lot of difficulties to participate [...] I can't be standing for very long, my legs hurt and my back too and I cannot carry banners anymore. Because I used to prepare a lot for the demonstrations and the street carnivals that we used to organize.

McCarthy and Zald have noted the important role played by youth in social movements in the United States

The ability of youth with intense value commitments to survive on subsistence incomes probably means continued periods of involvement in social movement activity for many members of this group. [...] whether a period of intense involvement during youth implies that individuals will continue heavy outlays of energy and resources in later life to movement activity seems an open question to us, unless funding allows career involvement (1987:387).

Long-term participants are likely to grow tired of old forms of collective action and also to become more pessimistic as to possibilities of success. As Deise of SPT put it with regard to women in the neighborhood women's health movement "Nobody can stand to go to a hearing, do a public demonstration... they are tired" ("*ninguém agüenta mais fazer audiência, ato...estão cansadas*"). Tarrow theorized this problem in the following terms "Repeating the same form of collective action over and over again reduces uncertainty and is greeted with a smile or a yawn. Participants, at first enthused and invigorated by their solidarity and ability to challenge authorities, become jaded or disillusioned" (1994:112).



Deise felt that there were new ways of staging protest activities and in fact, MMS came up with the idea of staging *praças de denúncias* (denunciation corners) instead of the traditional "*ato*" (public act) where activists harangue the gathering crowd on the microphone. In this new form of collective action, activists choose a busy commercial spot and chat and distribute pamphlets to passers-by. The number of individuals contacted is not given much importance.

Newcomers who are ready to experiment can be frustrated by the cautionary comments of long-time participants. A recent member of MMS expressed her ambiguous feelings towards long-timers in those terms: "those who know the work, who should be guiding us, these people do not give us their support, they are the first to be negative, 'no this won't work' or 'this doesn't work this way'."

Another element contributing to the diminishing involvement of feminists "from the city" with neighborhood women's groups is the real and perceived accumulation of knowledge and competence of long-time activists, especially those who have a higher level of education and cultural capital to participate in national and international level politics. As Janaina (F&S) argued "they are tired of going there [to the neighborhoods]. Imagine Anabel with the level where she is at, going to do a consciousness-raising group!"

In my understanding, this is the main reason given by neighborhood women for the current lack of participation of feminists from the city and they do not approve of it: Fernanda of MMS retorted to me: "do you mean that they grew too much to come back to the *bairro*," as I suggested this was a natural process to be expected. The others agreed with her. Similarly, a popular feminist said "The people who are in the secretary of the Rede, not all of them but

the majority, believe that they are above all this, that it is not their role to go to the street with a pamphlet in her hand and to talk to the population."

Others do not blame seasoned activists for this shift in their activities but simply deplore the lack of influx of new participants to take their place in local organizing: "women start as activists in their organizations, then with publications and going for...the national and international level and there is no one to replace these people at the local level, no?" For these popular feminists, feminists from the city have won their legitimacy by their past organizing efforts as they went by bus and on foot to remote corners of the city, carrying overhead projector under one arm and educational material under the other. All this with no financial compensation.

Even in a plain physical way, feminist activists who work at the international and national level travel often and hence are not physically present at the local level. This phenomenon led an academic observer of the movement to refer to the "femset" which is being constituted by these feminist activists who travel across borders, even more often than she does.

Finally, as Teresa, a veteran feminist, argued, working in the periphery is not providing visibility to anybody who wishes to participate at the national or international level, for example, in the National Council on Women's Rights (CNDM). She added that some people want visibility and others do not. It is a matter of personal ego. I will come back to this issue in chapter 7.

### The Desk and the Street

Social movements are embedded in the cultural matrix they come from. In Brazil, as in the Latin world in general, feelings against "manual" labor and in favor of intellectual work run strong. It is no surprise if this differential valuation is carried over in feminist and popular movements. This notion struck me when I heard the local, organizing work being referred to as "*trabalho braçal*" (literally "manual work").

The middle class feminist activists and scholars who embarked on the women's movement adventure in the 70s deserve special credit. They broke down these customary categories and preferences by leaving their protected world to meet women in their homes and neighborhoods. As the political arena has returned to a more familiar scene and women's issues are on the agenda, the power and appeal of the written word is back.

The way written knowledge is valued came through on a number of occasions: Nara of SPT recalls "At this time I had the idea of starting a study group...but we had to postpone organizing this group because everybody wanted to be part of it." Ana Maria of F&S expressed wanting to write more: "I would like to do other things as well, to be able to write a bit, write a book and do...I would like to learn things now, I would like to become more of a student, no."

Popular feminists for their part believe that organizing and local work is "repetitive and arduous" (Cecília MMS) while writing and other "intellectual" work are easier. According to Deise of SPT, popular feminists think that this is the reason why "city" feminists prefer to engage in these activities and no longer come to the periphery. Moema of The Casa da Mulher agreed that "it is tiring to do the same thing three times in a row" ("*enjoa fazer três vezes a mesma coisa em seguida.*") She said she heard some feminists saying "I don't do this anymore.

The women want to talk about knowing their own body, these things that we were doing 15 years ago [...] I've done it, I don't do that anymore. I won't walk all that way anymore [...] let others do it, or then let them find a solution of their own."

Academic feminists are also put on the stand: "In the past a lot of people found legitimization as feminists, as professionals, thanks to neighborhood women. Then they got a job, they started teaching at the university, and abandoned the rest. Today no, today they charge for what they do!" These are the words of a volunteer feminist, which reflects opinions I have heard elsewhere. It is true that a number of feminists who were working towards a university degree chose to work with neighborhood women's groups because of their feminist and leftist ideology and commitment. They could have chosen to do something else. As Nancy Fraser puts it "the radical academic is not an oxymoron" but "radicals in academia do find themselves subject to competing pressures and counterpressures" (1989:2). Brazilian feminist scholars are no different, and of course not all fit under the label "radical." But all are sucked into the other dimensions of academia. The more worrisome question is whether and why there are fewer feminist scholars today who decide to do the kind of fieldwork which allows them to interact with neighborhood women. Again times have changed and many other possibilities of studying gender have opened up.

### Professionalization Accelerates these Processes

How is the NGOization of the movement contributing to these processes? I have identified several factors which are the following: the very organizational form of NGOs, which make it difficult for new members to join them; the importance of the visibility of their work as professionalized organizations in order to secure funding; the particular importance placed on

knowledge in professionalized organizations; the institutionalization that professionalization brings along; and the increased personal need for fulfillment of individual professional activists.

As I discussed in chapter 5, it is currently difficult for women newly interested in joining a feminist organization to do so if they do not want to join one of the few remaining volunteer organizations, either because they do not share the political ideology of the party to which these organizations are affiliated, or for other reasons such as unmanageable distances to travel with a poor public transportation system. This was the case of Dulce and Clara, two young activists who found themselves isolated in the Western periphery where there is not much going on in terms of social movements.

Financing agencies' increasing call for NGOs to demonstrate the impact of their work (which will be discussed in chapter 8) is definitely contributing to a diminishing involvement with the periphery and to an increase in the production of written and audio-visual material, because of the little visibility the former affords. Edimeire of Sande puts it cogently in these terms:

In the case of the agencies, I feel that it is not so much in terms of numbers but rather the issue of impact. They require, they expect to see "what is the impact of your action?" It can be quantitative but I think that it is more in terms of the visibility of the work. If you do something which is more visible, it leaves a big impression, more than let's say the microscopic work [ants' work] which is done there in Guaianazes or in Campo Limpo. I think that part of the work that Sande does is submerged from this point of view of the world of NGOs and of agencies. Because it is work we do over there in the very end of Guaianazes, in the very end of Campo Limpo. I mean, this will only be more visible the day we create a video about it. Then everybody is going to say "Oh! what a great job you are doing!" because then there is a visible product, a product which can circulate throughout the world. Do you understand?

Nara of SPT points to another pattern: financing agencies usually will not be satisfied with an NGO's contention that popular groups will call upon them for support. Although they are not all alike, financing agencies prefer funding a pre-designed project rather than to

"respond to the demand" (*responder às demandas*). Nara said "for you to obtain financing today, our work misses..., for example, the fact that SPT is an organization which works mostly from the demands of others, it is very good for the movement but it is really bad for an agency to trust us. Do you understand?"

Nara explains further that financing agencies have "this fad, this fashion which is starting to take over, of communication things" ("*Essa coqueluche, que estão entrando na moda, das coisas da comunicação*") so that it is now important to have an impact on the media ("*impacto na mídia*") which is one reason why written and audiovisual materials are increasingly produced. Another issue is the measurability of impact or rather, the nonmeasurability of the impact of working with the grassroots:

For many agencies, you have to see this as well, those who have been financing some groups for 20 years and they cannot see what is the impact and they cannot measure it. Publishing materials at least does two things, it gives an idea that it is being distributed, that in some form it is reaching people, and it gives an idea that the group is able to systematize and organize its knowledge, it gives an idea of the theoretical strength of this group as well, no?

On another occasion, Nara referred to what she perceived as the lack of politicization of neighborhood women's groups. Her impression was that for these women participating in workshops was like "*tomar chazinho*" (having tea) while the impact of their work in the lives of women who participated in their workshops at the *Instituto Cajamar* (a political institute linked to the PT) as well as to trade-unions, was much clearer.

Both SPT and F&S have a number of publications, which take the form of magazines, newsletters, educative booklets (*cartilhas*), videos about the organization or for educative purposes, such as on sterilization or abortion. All of these material can be, and in SPT's view, are elaborated with the intent to be used by the leadership of neighborhood groups or by others

in their work with the grassroots. Nara insisted on the importance of "*instrumentalizar as ações das pessoas*" (offering the necessary support for people's actions):

This is why, as far as the Bulletin is concerned, we made a great effort to make it super accessible, and in the case of the educational kits, we are making a great effort to pass them on to the group [the neighborhood groups that were involved in the elaboration of those kits] with a training course, no? To integrate the passing on of at least part of the kit to the groups with which you work, no? as training of trainers (*multiplicadores*).

F&S' situation is different since the group was not designed with the intent to work specifically with the grassroots. While some of their publications are educational material for the training of other women (*formação*), others are more along the lines of position papers/research reports addressed to policy-makers.

The relationship of social movements, especially popular movements, with knowledge and especially expert knowledge, has been one of ambiguity, at best. Of long date, movement activists have mistrusted intellectuals, often disregarding the role intellectual activists have played in the lives of these movements. Movements have tried to demystify expert knowledge and emphasize the ability of all to contribute. This position is still present and expressed in statements such as Flora's of The Casa who lamented that women did not come to their biodynamic lessons when the bonafide instructor was not present. She told me something to the effect of "it is not good when people look up to one person as the holder of knowledge."

As times are changing, there is a renewed value placed on expert knowledge and the production thereof. When feminist groups started there was hardly anything written on women or gender. The groups themselves pioneered the exploration of these issues. With time they accumulated experience and some of them felt the need to '*sistematizar*' (systematize) it. Publications seemed the way to go. Nara explains it in those terms, "We are 20 years old. What

is our role today? SPT when I joined [in 1986] already had this preoccupation with the articulation, the systematization and the production of educational materials. But SPT had never managed to turn this into something concrete [...] The Bulletin is our first positive experience."

The desire to systematize one's experience is not unique to NGOs, but is a trend amongst organizations that have accumulated experience over the years. Kannabiran and Kannabiran (1993) describe a similar process for a volunteer feminist organization in India. However, it is likely to be compounded in NGOs by the fact that they might feel the pressure to remain "on top of things" if they are to secure and maintain funding, or because they see themselves as the vanguard (*vanguardia social*) as Ana Maria and Sandra of F&S put it. For whatever reason, NGOs increasingly feel the need to deepen their knowledge. Nara (SPT) explains that the knowledge production process has shifted partly from an inductive effort starting with the grassroots to a more deductive process which she calls "theoretical deepening": "so, topics were discussed a lot with the questions that came out of the region and not so much with this issue of theoretical deepening, of this 'let's see how we can learn theoretically.'" <sup>5</sup>

The desire for personal growth for NGO members also has to be taken into account when considering why there is less action in the periphery. Indeed, professionalized activists do not have another professional arena to fulfill this need (see chapter 5). The need to experiment, to explore new horizons and to try oneself out at new challenges tends to drive NGO participants away from local work.

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<sup>5</sup> Quote from a research report done on SPT in 1993 (page 121).



The best example is probably that of Marina, of SPT, who is a devoted NGO activist committed to building up the women's movement base. She left the Eastern periphery with a heartache (*com dor no coração*) because she knew it was good opportunity for her:

I think that it was in 92, 93 that I physically left the Eastern Periphery, with pain in my heart [...] I was still in the organization [...] responding to the demands for feminist training and, at that time, I was also a member of the coordination. So this was a very difficult change for me. At the same time I wanted it, I knew that it was important. In a way it ends up being a certain level of specialization, even if we don't call it that way, it is a way of improving your work. I thought this was good, but at the same time I was hurt to have to leave the Eastern periphery because my involvement with the region has always been very intense. So it was a moment of internal conflict, but a positive conflict...

#### "The Feminists Are Still The Others"

Up to now I have focused on what keeps "feminists from the city" away from the periphery, but it is important to see the other side of the coin: what is the part played by popular feminists in this story? Janaina who has one foot in F&S and another in a popular feminist group, cogently noted one day that women from the neighborhoods should start reflecting upon their difficulties to deal with the situation and with the women who need to be organized there.

Deise from SPT who has worked with women in popular movements for several years now had an opinion on the matter which convinced me. Basically, she said the women "still think that the feminists are the others" (*as feministas são as outras*). Indeed I encountered numerous situations which testified to popular feminists' lack of confidence in their abilities to lead a workshop or a debate for women, etc. For example, some women from the Grupo de Mulheres da Zona Leste were supposed to give a workshop on women and violence at the III Women's Meeting in São Mateus celebrating the 1995 International Women's Day. They ended

up canceling the workshop. Gloria, the SPT technical staff who gives them *assessoria* (support) said that the women did not feel prepared to give the workshop. She jokingly and affectionately added that they were *medrosas* (cowards). Similarly, Rosa, who is a member of MU and works in a nucleo in a faraway neighborhood, repeated several times during her interview that she did not have the necessary knowledge to conduct meetings with the women and discuss women's condition. She usually invites people to give talks. She was not convinced when I told her that it was mainly a matter of getting the women together.

What is at the root of this lack of confidence? First of all, it is good to remember that if most of these women have been popular activists for several years, they have assumed their feminist identity only recently, usually in the 90s. To see themselves as feminists and actually perform the consciousness-raising and organizing around women's issues per se carries a lot more personal threats to them because of the anti-men label that they fear being stuck with.

A certain degree of dependency has also developed between these groups and the groups which provide them with "*assessoria*," or even with their paid activists, called *liberados*.<sup>6</sup> Two of the most seasoned popular feminists in the Zona Leste attest to this process: Fernanda said during a meeting of Movimento Mulher e Saúde (MMS) "we always let those who are paid do the job. Because of this we end up not learning" ("*sempre deixamos quem recebe fazer as coisas. Assim deixamos de aprender.*") Cecília for her part acknowledged that she has no idea about the donor agency which is financing their campaign against gynecological cancer. She said "I don't even worry about knowing what this acronym

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<sup>6</sup> This is not a small phenomenon: According to Ana Maria Doimo 43% of the participants in a popular movement national conference in 1993 were part-time or full-time *liberados* compensated with project money to ensure a permanent contact and/or to "work with the base" (1995:163).

means, you know. It's like this: Deise knows so we let her take care of it" (*"Nem me preocupo em saber o que quer dizer essa sigla, viu. E como assim, a Deise sabe então a gente deixa pra ela resolver."*)

During the same conversation, a hint crept up about another contributing factor to the shyness of popular feminists in taking up the role of the feminists from the City. Cecilia is one of the pioneers of popular feminism and has broken more than one gender taboo in her personal life. Yet, she says:

If we want to go forward, we are going to need some *assessoria* because we... we are a bit at the limit of what we know. I think that we are getting behind in terms of women's issues, especially to discuss the social role of women, and stuff. There is this thing about the gender issue, and everywhere you go they talk about this, I think that we still have difficulties in understanding exactly what it is. It's a new word for the women of the social movements from the periphery...

In other words, the emphasis on deepening of knowledge and of theoretical production by NGO feminist activists and the creation of a number of "experts" on gender is dampening popular feminists' drive because they cannot help but compare themselves to these "experts". Again, this would be true without the creation of NGOs but these professionalized organizations are likely to have accentuated this process.

To sum up this section, feminists from the city are less involved with neighborhood groups in the periphery of São Paulo because formal democratization of the regime has offered them other channels of expression for social change. This is reinforced by the long experience and leadership of the participants in the São Paulo movement which makes them good candidates for involvement in institutional politics, as well as by the renewed value placed on the production of knowledge. The professionalization of "city" feminist groups has accelerated the broadening of their spatial scale of action (and concurrent lesser emphasis on the local) by

making it difficult for new members to join NGOs, by making it more pressing to provide visible impact and to be theoretically informed and on top of the literature, and by limiting the arena of personal growth of members to that of their NGO work.

Not only are feminists from the "city" less involved in empowerment and organizing activities in the periphery of São Paulo, but the needs and characteristics of research and pilot projects are changing the nature of their involvement with neighborhood women, when they do get involved.

### Unraveling a Paradox

One day, an NGO activist called me because she wanted my opinion on the report she was writing for a donor about an STD project. She wanted to let them know that the methodology they suggested did not work because there was a high turnover among the participants: they never managed to get the same group twice in a row. She added that they were having trouble finding groups in the periphery. I expressed my surprise to her since I had heard complaints that nothing was done there anymore. She retorted that she would like to know who these women were because she needed them! She then related one occasion when she went to the faraway neighborhood of Itaquera for a workshop and only one woman, out of the 50 contacted, showed up. Quite a paradox! on the one hand, popular feminists were lamenting the fact that feminists from the city are no longer involved with their activities; on the other, NGOs seemed to have trouble finding groups with whom to do their projects.

In fact, women's health NGOs, with the exception of SPT, usually have access to neighborhood women through an established popular feminist group. This is true of F&S working with The Casa and another group they fostered in the 80s. This also happened for a

black women's NGO who developed one of its projects on AIDS/contraception partially with a feminist volunteer organization which does not focus on ethnic/racial issues. These events hint at the weakness of most NGO ties with peripheral neighborhood groups. This weakness is acknowledged by the leaders of the larger feminist NGOs —although there is tremendous agonizing on the subject for some. For proof, it was argued during a meeting of the *Rede Regional de São Paulo*, that the *Rede* had little rapport with urban popular movements and that if particular groups did, meaning SPT and The Casa, they should be working along those lines.

How do we unravel this paradox? There are several factors at play. The situation of neighborhood women no doubt has changed in the 90s as I have discussed earlier. However, the processes of group capacity building as well as the specificity of NGOs' most ubiquitous working instruments, namely projects, need to be considered.

### Group-Capacity Building

It is good to remember that it takes time to form a cohesive group. It took Beatriz and Moema of The Casa one year of continuous work (twice a month) to consolidate a group of teen-age girls for a funded project on sexuality and contraception in adolescence. Early in the process, they complained of high turnover, but by the time I visited their workshops, they had a core group of 10-12 regular participants. Similarly, Tatiana (Mulheres Unidas) noted how easily 17 women came together for a meeting with her in Jardim Boa Esperança, although there was another meeting going on at the same time and she had not been in that neighborhood for several months. This neighborhood was born 10 years ago as an invaded

settlement. MU had been involved with this community since the beginning. This long-term involvement explained the good turn-out.

The difficulties encountered by Rosimeire in consolidating the group might therefore disappear with long-term involvement. But the project itself does not require long-term involvement of F&S with the group. Indeed, the characteristics of certain types of projects, namely research and material production projects that NGOs conduct, besides being limited in time are fundamentally different from traditional social movement activities.

### The Characteristics of Projects

Projects are of various kinds. However, recently NGO projects rarely target organizing or consciousness-raising. Many take the form of educational pilot or research activities. As such, projects have certain goals to achieve. When workshops are conducted with neighborhood women for such projects, the theme, content and form of the workshop are decided mostly in advance in the project proposal. Again, projects for *assessoria* are obviously more open to the self-determined needs of the grassroots and workshops conducted during *encontros* are a different beast altogether, more akin to old style feminist workshops.

I want to emphasize that, in all the workshops I observed, I witnessed only respect towards neighborhood women, in particular respect for their right to privacy. In most cases permission was asked for me to participate beforehand and permission was also requested whenever the group would be taped. In all workshops I also could appreciate the know-how of the technical staff involved, in particular to ensure participation. In all cases the women were made to feel at ease with topics which may be difficult to discuss in public, such as sexuality.

Unfortunately, projects, as working instruments, comprise certain aspects which can be less positive. These aspects were particularly salient in two cases, which did stand in sharp contrast with other NGO activities I observed but which point at potential pitfalls. The two projects I am referring to dealt with the women and AIDS problematic. In both cases the topic had already been decided and two groups of women were recruited through popular feminist groups in the periphery. In both cases, the participants were newcomers to women's groups.

In the situation which I observed, not only was the topic already decided but the format was also extremely restrictive: the participants were to answer a lengthy, repetitive questionnaire twice, that is before and after having participated in a series of workshops based on an educational brochure previously designed. According to the project put together in conjunction with the donor, the purpose of the whole "experiment" was to test the effectiveness of the brochure and of women only versus mixed groups in AIDS prevention.

The two women responsible for this project were themselves quite dissatisfied with the format and had tried to negotiate with their donor, a northern feminist NGO, a methodology more appropriate to the reality of the neighborhood women. To little avail. I was personally appalled at this lack of sensitivity on the part of the northern NGO. In fact, I learnt later that originally, the Brazilian NGO women intended to "*capacitar*" (train) women in the movement to work with the educational material, not to conduct research. But the northern donor had other plans. At that point, the Brazilian NGO activists were hoping to promote at least self-esteem and empowerment among the participants and to have a few of them join the popular feminist group they had been recruited through.

In order to make the project more palatable to the participants, especially the beginning part of it, which entailed going through the questionnaire without any preparation, the Brazilian

NGO women creatively thought of offering the women an "*oficina de beleza*" (beauty workshop), which showed the women how to use cheap everyday products in an alternative way to take care of themselves, thus reinforcing their self-esteem. Later the participants were invited to lay on the floor and guided to a relaxed state, something most of them probably had never done before. The broad smiles on their faces as they lay on the carpeted floor were quite telling of their positive state of mind! Then came the questionnaire.

The imposed "scientific" model of before and after experiment was also troublesome to our two technical staff because the questions regarding AIDS and sexuality were intrusive and eye-opening to the participants with regard to the risks of getting the disease because of an unfaithful husband. Principally, should the woman not come back for the following workshops, the woman would be left to her doubts and wondering. The NGO had tried to minimize this problem by working with women who knew a member of a neighborhood women's group.

The project proposal was extremely precise as to how the workshops should be conducted. It went as far as to specify that the technical staff should ask the women to introduce themselves from right to left! The staff was also supposed to introduce themselves and explain the purpose of the project only after the questionnaire had been given for the first time. Whatever happened to this donor's feminist research methodology? To their credit, the NGO staff did not comply with these instructions and introduced themselves before giving the questionnaire. Any questions the women had about the purpose of the questionnaire was also answered. A number of other features of this project were imposed by the donor and not to the liking of the Brazilian implementor, but they had little choice but to accept and try and bend the rules later. Again, this project had not been elaborated like most others, starting from a perceived need by the NGO but had been largely imposed by the donor. However, as NGOs



increasingly face financial difficulties, they might find themselves unable to refuse projects with which they do not wholeheartedly agree.

As for the second project which entailed problematic practices, I heard about it second hand, after the fact, through two fairly unhappy neighborhood feminists who had been asked by an NGO whether they could work with them. After serious discussion the NGO members finally agreed to come on a Saturday afternoon, and not during the week. The result, however, were not to the satisfaction of the neighborhood feminists. Their main grievance was that no space had been given for the women in the workshop to come up with their own questions or issues. I was told, here was one of the few times these women were face to face with medical professionals and they were not able to engage them on their own terms. In the end, the neighborhood feminists felt that they and the workshop participants had been used because these NGO members needed one final group to comply with the requirements of the project for which they had been funded.

In fact, the issues leveled against this type of undertaking are similar to the questioning of traditional academic research. The issue of the unequal balance of power between the research subjects and the researcher need to be addressed. As I have noted in my introduction this is not always easy. NGO intellectuals were important players in leading the way towards participatory research (Landim 1993a) and need to continue in this direction.

Coming back to our original paradox of NGOs having trouble bringing together groups to work with, while neighborhood feminists argue that there is now less interaction, it might come from the discrepancy in expectations and interests between the different actors. Indeed, when expectation and interest meet, the result is impressive. I remember two workshops which were particularly successful, although there were others. One was given by Rosimeire (F&S) at

the 8 March celebration in Santo André. At this type of meetings, the participants are able to chose their workshop by theme. Rosimeire was offering one on sexuality. For many, it probably was their first experience with discussing this issue in a group, yet they were made to feel comfortable. 27 women participated in that workshop. Rosimeire prompted the women to identify the particular topics they wanted to deal with and worked from those.

The second case that comes to mind was a workshop on menopause elaborated in collaboration with the Movimento Mulher e Saúde and by SPT. Some 70 neighborhood women showed up on a cold and rainy Saturday afternoon in a fairly central location (Pastoral do Belém). No doubt the organizing strength of the Health Movement of the Eastern Periphery was behind the numbers but the topic was obviously appealing. In both cases, there was plenty of room for the women to express themselves and ask questions.

It is also good to remember that if NGOs can be constrained by donors' preferred themes and practices, volunteer organizations also have their agenda and work along certain themes which they deem important. However, if they are to mobilize women, they have to be attentive to the latter's own interests and needs. Indeed, in the workshops elaborated by the Casa da Mulher that I observed, the participants were asked to think about what would be the theme of the next workshop.

In the case of MU, few workshops with neighborhood women *per se* were organized while I was in São Paulo. On the other hand, neighborhood leaders and individual members did participate in activities organized in the headquarters. In the few workshops in the periphery that I accompanied, Tatiana did have specific issues that she wanted to talk about. Mainly she wanted to share with them her experience at the IV UN Conference on Women in Beijing. However, she set another date to come back and discuss the housing issues the women wanted

to work on. MU's activists, maybe as a result of their political ideology --they used to be linked to the Communist Party-- do not share the "*basista*" ethos of other social movement organizations linked to the PT.

### Conclusion

Recent years have witnessed multiplication of feminisms in Brazil, in particular through the emergence of popular feminism. This process is not free of tensions as a result of class and race differences. The time and efficiency concerns that are more likely to be felt by NGOs due to their accountability to donors tend to constrain the effective participation of all in movement-wide fora, at a time when it is most needed, and thus limit the possibilities of a more transformative agenda.

Simultaneously, in São Paulo there has been a withdrawal of "feminists from the city" from their activities in the periphery, while they broadened their scale of action to the national and international levels. This second trend is a result of the changing socio-political scenario in the country as well as of the age of the movement and its participants. This trend has been deepened by the professionalization of the movement which makes joining a feminist organization more difficult and deepens the need for visibility and expert knowledge of feminist organizations, as well as the need for personal growth of individual activists: working in the periphery does not carry as much weight as other activities. This move away from the local contributes to the ebb of mobilization at the grassroots along with other factors.

Finally, some NGO projects, especially research and pilot projects, have the potential to start away from the self-identified needs of neighborhood women and to reproduce the power differentials of traditional research methodologies. Such project designs are likely to encounter

little enthusiasm on the part of neighborhood women. Volunteer feminist organizations, even if they have a given agenda, must ensure the participation and the satisfaction of women in all stages of their activities, otherwise the women will not come back and they represent their main resource and reason for existence.

This issue goes back to the politics of needs interpretation identified by Nancy Fraser (1989). Feminist groups and NGOs are certainly in a privileged position to defend all women's needs and interests vis-à-vis the State. They are completing a crucial task. However, as feminist NGO leaders' ties to the grassroots become more tenuous or at least more punctuated in time, and their interpretation of the needs of neighborhood women is based less on current, first-hand contact but increasingly on past experience or on "theory" produced elsewhere, they must be careful not to overlook the class and "race" aspects which distinguish their own lives from those of neighborhood women. Keeping the bond alive and well is essential. The following chapter will consider the other side of the coin, that is women's NGOs increasing participation in national and international politics.

## CHAPTER 7

### PUTTING ON THE ROOF BEFORE LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS? FEMINIST NGOs, THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE STATE

Looking at pictures of herself taken during a demonstration a few years ago, a leading professionalized activist remembered with nostalgia how healthy and beautiful she was in those days. She turned to another long-time activist: "When the institutional agenda came upon us, that was the end of us!" ("*Quando a agenda institucional nós pegou..., nós ferramos!*")

#### Introduction

The period of transition politics in Brazil, as in other Latin American nations, has offered a rapid opening of possibilities for dialogue and negotiation with national authorities (Alvarez 1996). The involvement of sectors of civil society in the constitutional process, in various national and state Councils and, in São Paulo, the participation of feminist activists in the *Coordenadoria da Mulher* (women's Coordination) of Luisa Erundina's municipal government paved the way for policy-oriented and lobbying work on the part of social movements.

Recent years have also seen an incredible involvement of civil society at the level of the UN. According to Gordenker and Weiss (1996) this foray of NGOs in the UN milieu is not only a result of their reputation for cost-effectiveness or of technological developments, such as fax and cybercommunication, but also a consequence of the end of the cold war. In this new, more relaxed international atmosphere, in which fear of neoimperialist or communist interventions have receded, the need for "high politics and security, particularly over nuclear

issues" gave way to the rise of "low politics" in which NGOs had a comparative advantage due to their "capacity for direct action" and "advanced knowledge [...] on issues such as gender, the environment, AIDS, relief assistance, human rights and community development" (Gordenker and Weiss 1996:24). In the case of women's NGOs, the acknowledgment of the need to incorporate women in development efforts, partly a result of the absorption by multilateral institutions of the women in development discourse (see Chapter 8), also contributed to the need for their expertise on gender issues.

The involvement of São Paulo feminist NGOs in national and international politics should be understood in this context of institutions in need of gender specialists calling upon feminist activists. In fact, some professionalized activists refer to the time when "the international agenda came upon us" as if they had been seized in this twirling of activities on the political scene without having chosen to.

Yet, I believe that feminist NGOs' increasing involvement in policy-oriented politics also resulted from these activists' belief that lobbying congress and international bodies, as well as working with the media, is more effective than changing people's minds and habits at the micro level and could affect a larger number of women's lives. Again, they have been seizing the opportunities offered by the opening of the Brazilian and the international political scenes. In Gordenker & Weiss' words "NGOs that had promoted relevant policies and actions energetically exploited or expanded direct access to policymakers" (1996:24). NGOs' professionalized and formalized organizational form also has allowed them the necessary structure to interact with public authorities more efficiently.

The state should not be viewed as a monolith, but rather as "a network of power relations existing in cooperation and also in tension"(Rai 1996:5). Therefore, interaction with

the state should not be viewed, as in most Western feminist poststructuralist approaches, as having "only [...] one outcome - the production of 'regulated, subordinated, and disciplined state subjects" (Rai 1996: 7). On the other hand "influencing the state in the interest of women by infiltrating it" should not become the main strategy for social change, as among the Australian "femocrats" (ibid.). Analyses of the state by third world feminists have been more nuanced, showing that the state is generally in symbiosis with patriarchy but that it can be used by women's movements to promote gender equity under given regimes and conditions, especially if contradictions within it are exploited (ibid.). In other words, the state and supranational authorities are important arenas for struggle for women, and for that matter for other oppositional sectors within civil society. However, they should not become the priority, to the detriment of the feminist micro-level cultural change project.

In this chapter, I discuss how this increased involvement in policy-formulation at the national and international levels has been accompanied by a move away from the mobilizing and solidarity-building work of the women's movement, which do tend to correlate with localized activities. More time-efficient, goal-oriented formats and dynamics have replaced solidarity-building efforts and events. Therefore, trade-offs have appeared between the local, national and international agendas of the movement.

The involvement of some groups or individuals in institutionalized politics has won numerous gains for women but it has also brought to the fore issues regarding their representativity and legitimacy to speak in the name of Brazilian women: All the more so as some have more chances to participate than others. Their involvement also reflects differences in the strategies for social change they favor.

### A Move Away from Local and Street Activities

Among the women's health professionalized groups active in the São Paulo area, three out of four are policy-centered. SPT is the only one for whom local organizing and consciousness-raising is considered important by the leadership. Yet, even SPT is now working with already organized women's groups, such as women in trade unions and decreasing its activities in local neighborhoods. Moreover, Nara, SPT's leader, also mentioned to me that the group wished to increase its focus on public policies. It had made a conscious effort to become more national by working with trade-unions and with the women of the *Central dos Movimentos Populares* (Grassroots Movements Federation), as well as by providing training sessions and workshops whenever there was a demand for them in other states. The publication of a newsletter of national scope was also part of this plan.

This emphasis on the institutional agenda beyond the local is reflected clearly in NGOs' strategies and activities as was shown in earlier chapters, in particular in their lesser involvement with neighborhood women's groups. Simultaneously, interest and energy for protest activities, such as the traditional 8 of March demonstration (in commemoration of the International Women's Day), or for national *Encontros*, the much beloved and nostalgically remembered meetings that bring women together, are dwindling. The purpose of these meetings was defined as follows in the report on the 11th national *Encontro*, held in 1991: The methodology of the Feminist *Encontros* has exactly this function which is to break, to undo the rigid structure of other events, to provide joy and exchanges at all levels, it is a learning experience for all of us." (Memória do XI Encontro Nacional Feminista 1991:36).



National *Encontros* had been organized annually from 1979 until 1987 and two more were held in 1989 and 1991. Yet, 6 years went by before the 12th *Encontro* was held, in November 1997, in Salvador, Bahia. Similarly, the 8 of March demonstration is remembered by activists as one of the highlights of past feminist years. Organizing the 1995 event proved less enthusiastic. Few feminist groups actually participated in the preparation of the event, and only one NGO did, SPT. In fact, it proved difficult to organize any type of street activities, such as an *ato* (public act) for the Day Against Violence Against Women, which did not take place despite the meeting held to prepare for it. The Latin American Day for the Decriminalization of Abortion (28 September) or the International Day of Action for Women's Health (28 May) were also very low key.

In other words, there are now fewer demonstrations and fewer *encontros* with the purpose of experimenting with a new sociability and building solidarity among participants, and more activities geared towards specific goals, in particular related to policy-making. As I have discussed in the chapter 2, the dwindling of such street activities is cause for concern if one considers their solidarity-building qualities, as well as the potential they have for bringing in new participants.

Not only are these events less common but the dynamics used in coalition activities are also influenced by the professionalization of the movement. The focus tends to be on more time-efficient formats, which are also less participatory.

### Different Dynamics in Mass Events

The Annual meeting of the *Rede*, the National Feminist Health Network, held in April 95, provides a good example of this kind of new, more task-oriented meetings and their

dynamics. Granted, the first part of the meeting was organized as a debate with the intent to exchange ideas with outside players in the field of reproductive health, such as representatives of the Health Ministry, researchers and representatives of the public health movement (*sanitaristas*) as well as to provide a public forum for the *Rede*'s position. Nevertheless, the overall format of the debate had very few characteristics of a feminist event but was thought out as a traditional academic conference with panelists up on a podium delivering fairly lengthy presentations to a listening audience. Some time was allocated for question/answer sessions. Titles such as "*dotor*" and "*ditora*" (doctor) were used, including for some of the feminist participants, thus increasing the distance between the podium and the audience. As a São Paulo feminist commented, the people on the podium were presented as "*estrelas*" (stars).

My field notes read: "There was no pause between the talks and the debate, which made the whole session extremely tiresome. As a result, people were leaving the room, chatting in the corners, drinking multiple coffees. [...] Similarly to the *Encontro* [the actual Rede annual meeting which took place immediately after this two-day debate] there was no opening or *encerramento* (closing ceremony) as feminists know how to do them. It was an extremely formal format." I went on commenting, this time about the dynamics used during the *Encontro* itself: "Even for the *Encontro*... there was no neat opening, nothing to warm up the women, to make the more *humilde* [the more quiet ones usually correlated with a lower socio-economic position] feel comfortable there, to entice them to talk later. At least the chairs were organized in a circle. There was no *encerramento* either. Except for a coffee- break-type buffet to which hardly anyone went as far as I know because I saw people running out, the only moment which I saw as collective identity-building was the skit that three women prepared on

Sunday night, during which they formed a circle and sang *Maria, Maria*. Other than this *nada!*... [nothing]..."

The evaluation of the whole four-day event by a São Paulo popular feminist was that "the way it was structured and the language used was not meant to have many people participating (*Era para poucas pessoas participarem*). She said it was done by and for the Executive Secretariat and the Council of Directors [of the *Rede*].

One of the organizers I interviewed was aware of these drawbacks of a more formal, time-conscious dynamic. Astutely, she felt that the informal possibilities participants had to socialize/network outside of the formal sessions, with feminists from other parts of the country, and this time even with public figures, made up for some of these difficulties:

I think that you cannot expect more from a national meeting with that many people, you see? The meeting is more to.. I think that what happens on the sidelines is much more important [...] The minimum that we need to ensure is that these people know that, every year they will meet and make plans together, do you understand?

In contrast to these events organized by professionalized activists, suffice it to recall the strong "us-building" flavor of *Encontros*, as described in their reports, maybe somewhat romanticized. A number of symbolic elements and practices contributed to this effect. They included songs, at least at the beginning and at the end! Musician Milton Nascimento's *Maria, Maria* can be said to have turned into a true hymn of the Brazilian women's movement<sup>1</sup>.

Relaxation activities, usually involving interaction or mutual touching among the participants

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<sup>1</sup> This popular song evokes the daily struggle of poor women, like "Maria," as well as their faith in a better future. In this song, Maria is "a woman who deserves to live and love like any other on the planet." She and her people "laugh when they should be crying and do not live but hardly survive." Yet, in this life, "you need to have strength," "you need to have grace and you need to have dreams, always" and Maria and her people "have kept the strange habit of having faith in life."

are another example. Purple paper flowers also blossomed in women's hair at many such gatherings, as did the color purple<sup>2</sup> in general. The symbolism attached to witches<sup>3</sup>—broom and pointy hat included—appropriated and stripped of its negative connotations, is also a strong theme in women's *Encontros*, especially of those organized by neighborhood women. These are good examples of the "paraphernalia of ritual" which Kertzer (1988) and Blumer (1974) have identified as reinforcing the feelings of belonging to a social movement which I mentioned in Chapter 2.

For example, SPT participated in the organization of the first meeting of the women of the *Central dos Movimentos Populares* on the 11th March 1995. As we and some 200 women members of various popular movements stood up for a moving opening ritual, Nara of SPT turned to me and said with a twinkle in her eye: "*Agora vamos rezar!*" (Now we're gonna pray!) Followed songs, hand-holding and declarations of intent for the day. The ultimate "ice-breaker" for those who swear by participatory techniques! Zé Albino, President of the *Central* at the time, then presented a short speech in which he did not fail to mention that women had a different way of organizing meetings, especially their openings. He himself noted that such

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<sup>2</sup> I am unsure as to the origin of the symbolism attached to the color purple with regard to the feminist movement.

<sup>3</sup> Neighborhood women activists in one of the groups I worked with at times called each other "*bruxinha*" literally "little witch" with an endearing subtext. At one of their meetings they distributed little handmade witches brooms, made out of a wooden popsicle stick and colored yarn. Mine read and still reads "*Mulher é... solidariedade!!*" (Woman means....solidarity!!). On an invitation to one of their parties, F&S also used a paper clipart representing a smiling witch flying off on her broom, dressed only with her pointy hat and cape flying off one of her shoulders, pointing in one direction as if she said "come this way!"

rituals bring people closer together and that the work they do during the day is influenced by this introduction.

I also had the chance to accompany five women from *Movimento Mulher e Saúde*, to a meeting they had arranged with the newly appointed Director of one Health Administrative District of the Eastern Periphery at his headquarters. As soon as we entered the small auditorium, the women changed the position of the chairs, which were in the traditional linear arrangement, to make a circle, apparently undisturbed by the dry comments of the administration's staff.

I was quite impressed at the way these women were determined to minimize and in a way did undermine the power of the authorities by coming as a group and creating this circle, in other words by imposing their way of doing, refusing to be molded into the surrounding bureaucratic culture. They still had a lot to battle against, in particular the techno-scientific language used by these administrators and doctors, some of them dressed in white overcoats, meant to impress them and keep their mouth shut.

### Relations of Local, National, and Supranational Agendas

The United Nations conference of 1975 gave a serious boost to women's organizing in Brazil. In fact, activists argue, the consequences extended well beyond what the UN had imagined (Schumacher & Vargas 1993). This shows that international top-down events can act as catalysts for local movements. Yet, as Elisabeth Friedman (1997) noted in the case of the Venezuelan women's movement, it is important to consider the potentially detrimental impacts of transnational organizing activities on local feminist organizing depending on which stage of its development the movement is in.

In the long-term, the three agendas --local, national and global-- are and should be linked. However, it is difficult for an organization to concentrate on all simultaneously because of the constraints on resources, namely on the number of members participating. The results of this trade-off are quite visible. Moema of *The Casa* :

This has been pretty difficult, there was no space left in people's agendas for the Rede [at the municipal level.] I understand that last year and this year have been very difficult, there have been several important events at the international level, like the Cairo meeting and this year with the evaluation of the decade in Beijing and it is necessary for people to go. But I think that we cannot let go of local issues to take care of the big events. [...] And next year, we have the [8th] international conference on women's health [organized and held in São Paulo.] And I am worried because things are gonna run the same way!

Edimeire, leader of a feminist NGO, on her part, wonders how an extremely conservative bill concerning sterilization made it through the municipal House of Representatives, and admits that feminists are in fact paying more attention to what is going on in the national congress:

Look! I don't know why this thing of this bill was passed in such an imperceptible way! I don't know what... and I include myself in this story because I am responsible, I am the representative of the Rede...I don't know how we let this ...how this escaped us like this. Because we did not see this bill in progress. [To the others:] Somebody has any idea? The sterilization bill? It seems that we follow up better on what is happening at the Congress than at the municipal legislature!

Beyond the problem of allocation of limited resources, international events also impose a certain rhythm to movement activities which leaves activists, especially volunteer activists, with the impression that they are running after deadlines over which they have no control: A number of Paulista organizations, in their large majority volunteer organizations, signed a letter "*a Carta de São Paulo*" in which they, among other things, complained about the accelerated rhythm of work imposed by these international deadlines. They wrote: "In the first place, we say that there is not enough time and it has always been like this: we have to go, we have to do

this, we have to discuss that, we have to think about this... quickly, everything must be quick...Who is imposing this rhythm on us? This does not leave us any time for dreaming, daring or creating..." (CIM 1994:9).

Finally, the prestige attributed to international work is another dimension which cannot be ignored. At a seminar organized by the São Paulo women's Forum for Beijing (in preparation for Beijing), a keynote speaker, back from some UN preparatory activities, warned the activists there assembled that, I am quoting my field notes: "First world women are already involved at the international level working with the global communication system, while we lack the money and so we are, she said: "stuck in the kitchen, working at local issues" (*"na cozinha, trabalhando o local"*).

This anecdote reveals the images and feelings that some leading activists associate with local versus international movement work. I do sympathize with the need for feminist activists from the South to gain more power within the international women's movement. Yet, as another presenter remarked, the local should be present in the global and should not be considered of lesser importance.

There is definitely a link between professionalization and internationalization of feminist organizations. Edimeire explains why it is essential to professionalize if one aspires to working at the national and international levels:

I would say that in a context of globalization and internationalization of social movements and of social questions, I think that if one aspires to intervene at the national and global levels, there is no way you can avoid the NGOization process, no? If you limit your scope of action to the local level of your neighborhood, or of your city, it is possible to maintain the earlier model of an association which functions without resources, without infrastructure, on the week-ends, depending on the free-time of its members which keeps getting rarer and rarer. But when you start thinking that this is a very limited scope of action, very limited for the processes that are occurring at the global level, you have to develop a professionalized structure, from

Monday to Friday, and then comes Saturday, and holidays, carnival, Christmas and everything, because this is how NGOs work...

On the other hand, volunteer groups, especially those of popular origins continue to value local work and to consider it essential. Moema of *The Casa* is convinced that building from the local up is essential. To her, leading with international politics while neglecting local issues means putting on the roof before laying the foundations:

I think that both are important. Because you cannot put on the roof before laying the foundations! So it is quite basic: first taking care of what is happening around us and then after that, or at the same time, start participating in other larger things [...]

Later on Moema argued that feminists from the popular classes could not work solely at the local or at the national/international institutional level, but they had to create a bridge between the two: "*Quem é da nossa origem não pode ficar só aqui ou só lá! Temos que fazer a ponte!*" (Those of us who come from a less-privileged background can't work only here or only there! We have to bridge the gap!)

Groups are more and more aware of the trade-offs involved in the internationalization of their activities. Reflecting on the difficulties of dealing with both local and national/international issues at the São Paulo regional chapter of the *Rede*, suggestions were made for a division of labor: those groups who are already engaging in local activities with popular movements and municipal lobbying continue to do so, while the others take care of national and international business. This proposition of course did not fly too well considering the differential value attributed to local versus international work.

In fact, there is a noticeable difference in the predilection of various groups regarding social change strategies. A continuum runs from those who prefer pressuring from below with mass-mobilization, calling attention to the press by being surprising or outrageous, to those



who would rather be pressuring through established channels by sending letters, activating their connections to powerful individuals and working their way into the political system. This continuum tends to correlate with the volunteer/professionalized continuum:

Professionalization tends to correlate with institutional politics, while volunteer groups tend to prefer pressure from below and mobilization. As an example of the latter position, Flora of *The Casa* argued:

It's no good insisting on working up there and, on the 28 of May, to organize a demonstration on the Paulista [most important avenue in São Paulo] with 30 women! I mean, where is the work of the whole year to bring a bunch of women to the demonstration for the legalization of abortion or against maternal deaths in Brazil? [...] The Campaign that the Rede decided upon during the last annual meeting [for the legalization of abortion] what was done was really just a poster! The campaign was not done. I went to a public act, it was only me who could go from the Casa, it was an ecumenical act organized by the Catholics for Free Choice, there were...there were not even 30 women...some 25 women...What you are doing does not stop the people who were passing by. This means that the job was not done. Because when you are there with a lot of people, of course passers-by are going to stop to see what it is all about... and the press comes to cover the event!

Yet, the best rendering I heard from this distinction, between a grassroots and an institutionally-based political strategy came from an SPT member and she squarely put herself in the camp of the "*grupos reivindicatórios*" or "*entidades ligadas mais de massa*" (claim-making groups or entities linked to the masses) as a volunteer activist called them:

It is this thing about the partners I am going to choose to organize my strategies. So, I organize a small seminar, or a conference to which I invite so-and-so who's important here, and so-and-so who is important there, like for that seminar on educational practices, no? Who is invited for the seminar?...women who work in the State Health system and who have a feminist perspective, women who work in the Health Department, women from financing agencies who fund health issues, and women from feminist NGOs who work with training. Me, if I was to organize a seminar, here we would invite the people from the trade-unions, the people from the Federation of Popular Movements, we'd call these women as well [from the State and federal health system] but why? because our conception of strategy is that much politics is not limited to that [institutional] space. It is a space crucial for you to mobilize, to organize an expressive, massive, strong articulation so that this movement makes claim and

pressures the State to take care of public policies. Now the other vision is different, it is that change in public policy will result from our involvement in the Department and state systems, from a little lobbying here with this representative or with that senator. It is me going to this seminar to Nicaragua where there will be people from the World Bank, from this or that, who will give money to the Health Department. I mean it is another type of political articulation, involving other actors, no?...which emphasizes other strategies. Basically, this is the difference between these two conceptions.

### Representation at the National and International Levels

In their overview of the history of feminism in Brazil, four members of the feminist movement noted that "the feminist movement has carefully established practices in order to avoid the representation of all by some, eschewing any type of representational structure by delegation. Priority is given to direct participation, and efforts are made to involve all those interested in participating in a specific initiative. The only representation accepted as legitimate is the representation of ideas" (Soares et al. 1995:319).

Sonia Alvarez argues that this rejection of representational structures is a by-product of feminists' distancing, by the 1980s, from leftist political parties which hailed the theory and practice of democratic centralism. Feminists had, up to that point, adopted some of their practices, as they put together "centralized" "coordinations" in which different sectors of the larger women's movement was "represented", "manifestos" would be drafted, and "*palavras de ordem*" (slogans) would be "consensually" agreed upon" (Alvarez 1996:7). On the other hand, direct participation was a distinctive element of the political culture of the groups influenced by liberation theology and most popular movements. The strong egalitarian ethics of these movements wrapped any issue of power with a taboo tinge. However, conflicts over power are present in these circles as in any other human organizations.

Today, feminist activist feelings towards representation are divided and ambiguous. Yet, issues of representativity and power particularly need to be addressed in the context of increasing institutionalization and contact with public power structures. As some feminist activists have themselves come to recognize, a lack of discussion on these issues leads to "conflict and strain in the movement" (Soares et al. 1995:319).

#### Institutions Push for Hierarchization...

A number of feminists, mostly middle-class and professionalized, are being called upon by national or international authorities to speak in the name of Brazilian women or of the women's movement, thus granting them recognition as "representatives of the movement". The problematic nature of these practices has been acknowledged by some of the women involved, which is a very positive step (Correa et al 1994; Schumacher & Vargas 1993).

A long-time observer of the São Paulo women's movement explained that, at the national level, "The State calls for "witnesses" from civil society to testify in parliamentary sessions in order to support their claim for this or that piece of legislation. Some members of parliament use the same tactic. The feminists who agree to participate in these sessions feel good because they consider that they are speaking to the benefit of women but they do not realize how much they are manipulated" [fieldnotes].

At the international level, the Cairo conference on Population and Development held in 1994 provides a prime example of how certain groups or individuals are picked out to represent the movement. The preparation process for this conference was quite restricted, with only 6 NGOs involved. In the words of a volunteer activist: "Cairo was a ghetto!" (*O Cairo foi um gueto*) A similar process would have occurred for the Fourth UN World Conference on

Women, held in Beijing in September 1995, but that was counting without the reaction of other sectors of the women's movement.

The information presented here on the early process for the preparation for Beijing was compiled mainly from the Bulletin published by CIM-Centro Informação Mulher (CIM 1994) as well as from informal discussions with activists and observers of the process.

In April 1993, the OECD (the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) decided that, in order to finance third world women's efforts for an evaluation of the women's question in the past decade, countries of the North should finance women in their geographic zone of influence. Consequently, the United States, through USAID, was to finance the organization efforts of Latin American women.

To this effect, a USAID representative was sent to Rio, São Paulo, Pernambuco and Brasília in July 1993 to contact a few groups, to urge them to accelerate their organizational process and to choose one NGO which would be USAID's interlocutor for the whole country and would receive the funding. The groups contacted in São Paulo were all professionalized: the Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde, Geledés, and Rede Mulher. The CIM bulletin describes the letter sent by USAID as "a gem of first world bureaucratism, authoritarianism and 'cooperation'" (*uma pérola do primeiromundismo de burocracia, autoritarismo e "cooperação"*) (CIM 1994:4).

### The Movement Resists

However, this time, São Paulo feminist groups, NGOs and volunteer groups alike, including all the support groups I worked with, reacted against this top-down strategy. They were questioning

1) Did USAID want to impose an organizational structure on us? 2) Why is USAID not using and channeling resources via the structures already built by women throughout these two decades of the existence of our movement? 3) Don't Latin American feminists have the right to establish their own process and to decide if they are going to, how they are going to and with whom they are going to evaluate the decade and build their own structures (if necessary) or strengthen those already existing (CIM 1994:5)

As a result of this questioning, an alternative organizational structure was suggested by feminists from Rio de Janeiro: Rather than setting the responsibility of communication and interaction with USAID with one NGO alone, the movement should be represented by a council of elected representatives (*um conselho de representantes eleitas*) (CIM 1994:5). Furthermore, USAID came under criticism for its tarnished image for supporting the Brazilian military regime in the 60s and 70s. Feminists who, for the most part, belonged to the opposition at the time —many of them suffered imprisonment and torture or exile— were staunchly opposed to financing by this agency.

Branca Moreira Alves, a long-time feminist who happened to be working at the time for UNIFEM took note of the mounting discontent and decided to allocate limited funds to the preparation activities. However, most of UNIFEM funding was dedicated to the official evaluation of the decade, rather than to evaluation activities by the movement, to the surprise of Brazilian feminists who considered UNIFEM as their long-term partner. According to the CIM newsletter, UNIFEM finally offered, on very short notice (2 days), financing for a first national meeting, because it needed to close its fiscal accounts (CIM 1994:7). Some Rio activists ended up accepting the idea and the financing, whereas many, especially in São Paulo, felt that it was too early to hold such a meeting which needed much articulation work with other organizations. In their words, "the truth is that we were surprised and hit by a meeting

which, in our view, should have been organized later, after we had brought to the process a greater number of organizations in the country" (CIM 1994:7).

In a letter, "*A Carta de São Paulo*", nine Paulista organizations, only two of which were professionalized, and two autonomous feminists, expressed their disagreement with the way the decision to hold the meeting had been taken, in particular how the movement's agenda was determined by "*uma elite do movimento...fazendo propostas para nós*" (an elite sector of the movement ...making proposals in our name) (CIM 1994:9). In this letter they complained about the time squeeze of the international agenda, as well as about the organizational authoritarianism resulting from the interaction with bilateral and multilateral development agencies. They also expressed their desire to organize meetings in all the different states of the country to ensure that this "*agenda imposta contribua para a nossa mobilização, articulação e fortalecimento*" (this imposed agenda contributes to the strengthening, mobilizing and articulation of our movement) (CIM 1994:10).

The First National Preparatory Meeting for the IVth World Conference on Women - Beijing 1995 (*Primeiro Encontro Nacional de Preparação para a IV Conferência Mundial da Mulher-Pequim 95*), financed by UNIFEM, was held in Rio de Janeiro on January 29 and 30, 1994. During this meeting the USAID funding was voted down but it was decided that the national articulation should be maintained and should remain in Rio. It was composed of 7 women, only one of whom was from a volunteer feminist organization. Three were working in

feminist NGOs and 3 in NGOs not identifying with the women's movement. Two of them were Afro-Brazilian feminists.<sup>4</sup>

By that time, State-wide fora had been organizing in most Brazilian states ensuring a wider participation. Although the preparation process was not free from tensions from that point on, it definitely reflected a much broader process in which most sectors of the Brazilian women's movement participated. It culminated in the National Conference held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1995.

### Power Differentials

Needless to say, the process prompted tensions in the movement as those groups or individuals chosen to represent the movement were seen as hogging power. In her usual flowery and vivid language, Fúlvia, a volunteer activist, compared the difference between the Cairo and Beijing preparation processes in those terms:

The groups involved in the Cairo preparation here were limited to 6 NGOs. Ah! we jumped on it! We made a fuss! Beijing is different! For Beijing, it is the movement that decides and we stopped this nonsense! Cairo was a ghetto! but not Beijing! And we made sure it did not happen again. Suddenly, we had 6 NGOs organizing the discussion around Cairo...[...] without any coalition structure. Yes, they retained information, did everything...they started organizing Cairo and Beijing during Eco-92 And we know that there's a bunch of people who took decisions for Beijing during Eco-92. But now, they're done with because the feminist movement realized what was happening and undid it all. Starting here in São Paulo! I mean, you have a place in our hearts, you are legitimate members of this movement, the feminist movement... You are legitimate. But you're not the boss! You're not the boss! And you're only going to talk in its name if we give you the power to do so.

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<sup>4</sup> Members of the Executive Secretariat of the national articulation were Hildezia Medeiros (CACES), Madalena Guilhon (CEMINA), Marta de Oliveira (ISER), Maria Rita Taulois (IDAC), Santinha Tavares dos Santos (CMB), Schuma Schumacher (REDEH), Vania Sant'Anna (FASE) according to Beijing Boletim numero 1 - Informativo da Secretaria Executiva, May 1995.

The analysis of three Brazilian feminist activists points in the same direction: "some women have been invited to "represent" Brazilian feminist positions in a variety of international fora. This has indicated a rupture in the tacit agreement that political dialogue within the national movement is central to both its values and its legitimacy and as such is absolutely indispensable. Neglecting or relegating consultations at the national level to secondary status results in conflict and strain in the movement" (Soares et al. 1995:319).

Indeed, the process sharpened the worries of a number of activists regarding "the women's movement's autonomy, its organization, the rhythm imposed by our institutionalized agendas, the bureaucratization of feminism, the excess of power of hyperfinanced NGOs who have the information, in other words, the need to democratize our movement" (CIM 1994:12).

In other words, involvement with institutional politics has brought to the fore power differentials within a movement where power differences are not supposed to exist. It also accelerated a process of hierarchization since some are designated as representative over others. But where does the "NGOs' excess of power" stem from ?

First of all, professionalized feminists have more time to participate in movement-wide events in general since they dedicate their full week to matters of the women's movement. Professionalized support groups thus have an easier time following the fast pace of work required by the international agenda, although it is strenuous for them as well. Usually, each NGO is represented by one member of the group who follows (*acompanha*) the preparation activities. The members of volunteer entities, who are only available on weekends and evenings, have more difficulties.

The fact that NGO activists can dedicate more time to these activities means that they do most of the work, such as drafting proposals for activities and organizing such activities,



which in turn means that they are more involved in key decision-making. A few volunteer activists who hold flexible jobs can also participate in the same way. But other volunteer activists feel pressured to professionalize lest they lose some of their voice in the movement.

Professionalized activists also have an advantage in facing the drastically increasing production of knowledge and information on gender and women in recent years since they have more time to read and individual team members can specialize on specific topics. They are becoming the experts who can then be called upon by the authorities. Edimeire, leader of a professionalized organization, brought these processes to my attention:

You need to deal with an increasing mass of information, which is every day more complex...you need to be able to devour pounds of daily information. Just in terms of the Aids issue, if we had to read what is being published, what we get here every day on Aids, I would have to sit here every day and not do anything else in my life! So we need to select this information and to divide the tasks. You have to work as a team, with people who are more and more specialized. So there are those who deal with Aids, those who deal with abortion, those who deal with sterilization, those who deal with the Race item [on censuses and other health information-gathering instrument] those who deal with sexuality. You have to have a collective work process and specialization with regard to information, you need to develop given skills.

Obviously, NGOs have more financial resources, although now all São Paulo support feminist groups, i.e. professionalized and volunteer groups that offer support to neighborhood groups, but one receive some funding. According to the interviews I conducted in each organization, the amounts received vary in the following manner:

Table 7-1: 1994 Budget of São Paulo Feminist Support Groups

<u>Type of Support Group</u>	<u>Nb of members</u>	<u>1994 Annual Budget (in \$US)</u>
Professionalized	14	100,000 to 200,000
Professionalized	16	245,000.00
Professionalized	38	300,000.00
Professionalized	12	100,000 to 200,000
Semi-professionalized	20	<50,000.00
Popular Volunteer	9 core	26,000.00
Popular Volunteer	7 core; 15 total	16,000.00
Volunteer	23 core; 1600 total	10,000.00
Volunteer	30 core; 500 total	0.00 (but infrastructural support from political party)

Differences in financial resources underscore differences in the potential to participate in coalition work and hence to participate in the decision-making. One clear example of this type of dynamic occurred when decisions had to be made about the VIII th International Conference on Women's Health which Brazilian feminists were in charge of organizing for November 1996. The nature of this international conference was to be decided during the Annual meeting of the *Rede* mentioned earlier. The meeting was to last from Saturday, April 1 until Monday, April 3 1995 in Rio de Janeiro. By Monday at lunch time, most volunteer and some professionalized activists had left. Those coming from São Paulo took the bus back on their 8-hour ride home in order to be able to start working the next day. When the discussion concerning the VIII th International Conference on Women's Health started at 2pm that Monday, there were approximately 35 women present (out of the 70 that had participated in the meeting). Although there were earlier disagreements as to how participatory and open the International Conference should be, the matter was settled without delay among those present. Those members of the São Paulo delegation still present, all professionalized feminists, were

those who could afford the plane shuttle to São Paulo that night, either at their own expense or sponsored by their organization.

Time and financial resources provide professionalized activists with an advantage in participating in international events. Their class, ethnic and cultural background, as well as their level of formal education, also contribute to the perception of the powers-that-be that they are the appropriate interlocutors: they possess the necessary cultural capital. This cultural capital keeps on expanding since professionalized feminists have more opportunities to get to know other activists and public figures through their participation in these conferences and meetings.

The lack of turnover which characterizes participation in such international meetings is not limited to the professionalized/volunteer divide, but tends to be further restricted to specific individuals within a given organization, namely to those who have accumulated experience in these types of activities. A kind of feminist elite has been created: a "femset". This is compounded by the fact that travel funds are allocated in most cases according to the criteria of financing agencies. Who gets funded gets to go! Who speaks English, and who is perceived as having the ability and capacity to negotiate --i.e. who has already done it-- gets to go! In other words, the movement does not decide on who will be representing it or acting on its behalf.

The national meeting in preparation for Beijing, held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1995 offered a breakthrough in this matter since for the first time, criteria were discussed to decide on who should be going. The criteria agreed upon were: regional diversity, race/ethnicity, that trade-unions should be represented, as well as women from the Catholics for Free Choice (because of the particular attack by the Vatican and its allies on the issue of abortion). Towards the end they included "capacity of intervention" (*capacidade de intervenção*). When a professionalized feminist mentioned the need to speak English, the others all booed. I am not

sure how this list of criteria was used considering that most of the funding for travel had already been allocated at that point. It was however an important step that the need for representativity be acknowledged by the movement.

To sum it up, participation in international policy-making is accentuating the hierarchization of the movement, especially along the professionalized/volunteer continuum. Seizing again on the analogy between local movement work and physical work (*trabalho braçal*) and expressing their resentment<sup>5</sup> towards this emerging "femset", neighborhood feminists argued that they did not want to be "*amassando barro*" (collecting mud) while the others are working "*la encima*" (up there) or that they did not want to be "*carregando o piano para as outras tocarem!*" (carrying the piano for the others to play).

Similarly, younger, newer members of NGOs complained about being cut out from assuming new roles. One complained that there was no rotation of those going and speaking in the name of the organization. She thought it was a problem that those who represent "women" in international meetings are not the ones who do the work in the neighborhoods. Another professionalized activist referred to the fact that "*as mães se acham ungidas pelas Deusas*" (the mothers think they are blessed by the Goddesses) and they do not trust anybody to do

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2 Max Scheler defines "*Ressentiment*, [as] an attitude which arises from a cumulative repression of feelings of hatred, revenge, envy and the like...When a person is unable to release these feelings against the persons or group evoking them, thus developing a sense of impotence, and when these feelings are continuously re-experienced over time, then *ressentiment* arises." (Scheler 1961 cited in Rollins 1997: 265). The notions of hatred or revenge are somewhat too strong to depict the relationship between movement activists. Yet, I believe *ressentiment* is an appropriate concept in this case because "a sense of injustice based on the belief that one does not deserve to be in the subordinate position" is a central element of resentment and because it appears in situations where an egalitarian discourse is accompanied by clear differences in power, prestige and education (Rollins 1997: 265). These two elements are definitely present in the women's movement.

the task as well as they do so they do not delegate, and end up complaining that they have too many things to do. As a result, in all the groups there are tensions and the younger women "*conspira contra as mães*" (plot against the 'mothers').

Organizing a clear transmission of knowledge, both technical and cultural --including on the spoken and unspoken etiquette in diplomatic and governmental circles-- is essential so that the pool of those who participate can be enlarged. Moema of *the Casa* has been insisting that the *Rede* organize seminars to that purpose:

[We also need] to be training new people, allowing people in the region, from less famous organizations, who are more... who have more difficulties in taking the front line in the Rede, at the national and international level for example. [We have to] train, allow these persons to assume new roles as well. But even this has been very difficult, there has not been any space left in people's schedule.

Besides the time constraints that Moema is referring to, there are also political issues regarding who the current leaders want to take over, i.e. who, in their understanding, will do a good job at succeeding them. With very pragmatic considerations in mind, these women are more likely to consider women who are similar to them, i.e. who have the "proper" formal education and cultural/social capital to interact with elite world diplomats or national policy-makers. I interviewed one of these promising younger feminists. She went to Beijing, where she was given access to the actual official conference. She recounted how seasoned activists spent time with her, explaining what was going on and what had to be done: basically how they intervene/consult with the Brazilian delegation when countries are in the negotiation process.

A positive note is that by March 1995, SOS Corpo, a feminist NGO from Recife, had just started, two weeks earlier, a training to this effect. They called it a training program for feminist leadership (*linha de capacitação de liderança feminista*) "we are going to train people in the history of feminism and with public speaking workshops, and on the [socio-

political conjuncture... do you understand? Training for public participation, do you understand?" The more subjective part of cultural capital assets is bound to be more difficult to transmit, except by "practical training", i.e. by immersion in the milieu.

To sum up the advantages of professionalized feminists within the movement and the hierarchization that ensued, let me quote Fúlvia again:

She [the professionalized feminist] has access to information from the whole world, and money, there are people paying for this person to go all over the world, and they go [...] But what cannot happen is the problem that we are now having in Brazil, especially in the feminist movement, [which is that] this story of getting money generates power. We went through a period, especially here in São Paulo, when feminist NGOs thought they were the Movement. And we do not think that they are the movement.

Susan Staggenborg (1988) noted similar processes within the US pro-choice movement when it came to coalition work. She showed that it is easier for formalized organizations to maintain coalitions. "Formalized SMOs [social movement organizations] play an important role in maintaining coalitions, but they also influence coalitions toward narrower, institutionalized strategies and tactics and make the participation of SMOs difficult" (1988:603). This is because formalized groups can assign one member as representative to the coalition and they have no scheduling conflict with the authorities' working hours. On the other hand, informal groups have scheduling conflicts, they are intimidated by the knowledge gap with formal group members, and have higher expectations of what can be achieved, while paid staff want to work on projects' whose feasibility is clear with defined goals and time limits.

### Relations with the State

One of the dictatorship's legacy to Brazilian popular and feminist movements is their wariness of cooptation by the State. They were born outside and in opposition to the

authoritarian state, although they recognized it as a privileged interlocutor on which to make demands (Cardoso 1992; Doimo 1995; Schumacher & Vargas 1993). With the return to civilian rule and competitive elections, relations with local level State agencies intensified and facilitated successes for the movements and for the NGOs who accompanied them in their struggles (Bebbington et al. 1993; Cardoso 1992). Moreover, as appeared clearly in the creation of the National Council for Women's Rights (CNDM) described in Chapter 3, the coming to power of former opposition parties such as the PMDB --or the PT at the local level-- provided new participatory opportunities for women and for other movements, at the municipal, state and federal levels. At the Federal level, these councils were unfortunately largely ignored under the presidency of José Sarney (1985-1989) and disappeared or were incapacitated under the Collor administration (1989-1992) (Hochstetler 1997, see chapter 3 for specifics on the women's councils).

It was only when Fernando Henrique Cardoso was elected President of Brazil in November 1994, that he called upon civil society and NGOs to work in collaboration with his government. "*Parceria*" (partnership) and negotiation became prominent on the Brazilian agenda, a mirror to the "*concertación*" emphasis in other Latin and Central American countries. ABONG (the Association of Brazilian NGOs) stated its willingness to go along, when the *Planalto* first made its wishes known. Silvio Caccia Bava, President of ABONG, argued that

Recently, the conquest by organized popular sectors of new institutional spaces (participation in congress and in municipal administrations) has broadened the responsibility of NGOs. From a critical analysis of society and the State, they were called to participate in the elaboration of concrete proposals of public policies. (Caccia Bava 1995a:5)

The fact that Fernando Henrique Cardoso was, for many years, a member of the well-known NGO/think tank CEBRAP and the leader of the small center-left *Partido Social Democrata do Brasil* (PSDB) (or Brazilian Social Democratic Party), were important factors in NGOs' hopes for improved relations and cooperation. NGOs' coming into their own in the late 80s, and emphasis on building up civil society rather than simply strengthening popular movements surely contributed to this position as well.

The rapprochement of NGOs and States in recent years has prompted much cautionary questioning on the part of scholars. Fears that NGOs will lose their autonomy and become operational arms of the State, but also weaken their innovative character and contribution to the deepening of democracy, have surfaced in various parts of the world (Hulme and Edwards 1997), including Latin America (Bebbington et al. 1993, Mirafab 1997). Two major consequences to this rapprochement deserve attention. One is political-economic in nature while the other is more strictly political.

The first major concern is that, in this era of the New Policy Agenda which favors neoliberal economics and liberal democratic theory—both moving away from the State—(Hulme and Edwards 1997), NGOs are becoming "functional to the neoliberal economic project" (Bebbington et al. 1993:51). This concern becomes particularly pressing when NGOs are subcontracted by States to implement social emergency programs, through social investment funds provided largely by multilateral agencies, which are designed to limit the negative consequences of structural adjustment programs (Bebbington et al. 1993; Mirafab 1997). In such situations, the State stops carrying out certain activities of its responsibility and thus redefines the social contract with civil society, especially towards the poorest sectors of the population (ibid.). Bebbington et al. further argue that the State rarely opens decision-



making channels in subcontracting relations with NGOs so that NGOs end up in a subordinate position. Through subcontracting and regular funding mechanisms, the dependency of NGOs on official funds has risen sharply in a number of countries around the world, including northern NGOs (see Hulme & Edwards 1997:7).

In Brazil however, subcontracting and other types of official financing have in fact remained very limited (Bosch 1997). So far, most affiliates to ABONG, including feminist NGOs (see chapter 8), have received very little government funding. Landim & Cotrim (1996:xviii) report that ABONG members' dependency on government funding in 1993 was as low as 3.2%<sup>6</sup> of their annual budget. This was before the Cardoso administration. Still, a few months after Cardoso's call for partnership and after beginning negotiations on the modalities of their participation, and as the neoliberal character of much of the new government policies appeared more clearly, ABONG adopted a more critical stance<sup>7</sup> towards what they saw as a possibility of cooptation: NGOs were to participate in the Federal social investment fund program, called "*Comunidade Solidária*."

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<sup>6</sup> Due to the extremely vague definition of NGOs, the proportion of government funding can be much higher than this 3.2%. ABONG does not include assistentialist, philanthropic organizations. I think that this explains why other sources claim that "an astounding 70% of Brazilian NGOs [are] reporting some kind of partnership with government agencies in 1996. NGOs influence or control R\$ 1.4 billion (close to US\$ 1.4 billion) in funds administered by the Ministry of the Environment, the Ministry of Social Security and Welfare and international banks (Folha de São Paulo June 9, 1996)" (Hochstetler 1997:17).

<sup>7</sup> By August 1995, negotiations had been maintained concerning the participation of NGOs in the "*Comunidade Solidária*" Program and their access to public funds (Caccia Bava 1995c). These negotiations did not fail to generate heated debate within the federation as some felt that accepting the money would amount to an endorsement of the government's social policies (Paludo 1995). In fact, over time, ABONG as a whole grew increasingly critical of the government's policies (see *Jornal da ABONG* 16 (August 1996) and 18 (May 1997)). As of October 97, no further steps had been made in the direction of governmental funding (R. Paz, Assistant Director, ABONG; personal communication).

*Comunidade Solidária* was criticized by ABONG for being clearly compensatory in nature. Under a single umbrella program headed by a Council, it coordinates existing federal poverty alleviation programs and targets *bolsões de pobreza* (pockets of poverty), likely to be exacerbated by the reduction of social services budgets, such as in the area of health and education, under the advice of the IMF (Caccia Bava 1995b.) Funding and programs are to be implemented by Government agencies, privileging state and municipal-level initiatives in an effort to decentralize, in partnership with civil society organizations who have been strongly encouraged to participate through public competition.

Recently, observers have noted that "[p]rograms for the mobilization of civil society, including nongovernmental organizations, to alleviate poverty [in which *Comunidade Solidária* should be included] have had little success so far." (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars 1997: 15). They further agree that when an "opportunity is created by individuals or by non-governmental organizations, it receives a great deal of support [but] that such initiatives must originate locally, and cannot come from Brasília" (ibid. 1997: 21). This would indicate, again, that Brazilian NGOs' response to the State has been limited.

In the case of Brazilian women's NGOs specifically, involvement with the State is also much more limited than in other countries such as Colombia or Chile (S. Alvarez personal communication). In Chile for example, SERNAM, the equivalent of the Brazilian CNDM, has been subcontracting a number of its activities to women's NGOs, which "has led to accusations that SERNAM has a clientelistic relationship with NGOs, comfortably coexisting with them and providing 'jobs for the girls'" (Waylen 1996:113). Yet, in Brazil too some women's groups are starting to receive government funds. In the case of the groups I worked with the money comes originally from the World Bank and is channeled through the Ministry of Health in the

area of AIDS prevention. Other women's NGOs were also funded through *Comunidade Solidária* for projects with young people. Faced with severe financial difficulties (see Chapter 8), there was much talk by the time I left Brazil among women's NGOs, of securing funding from the government. This, of course, does not come without fears of a loss of autonomy on the part of activists who are also aware that they do not want to substitute for the state.

Besides the issue of dependence on official funding and subcontracting, a second major concern is the State's efforts to "behead" organized civil society. Like Pronasol (National Program of Solidarity) for Salinas and the PRI in Mexico, *Comunidade Solidária* has been understood by its critics as an effort of the PSDB to establish and strengthen its base constituency (de Oliveira 1995, on Pronasol see Mirafab 1997). It has been further understood as a populist effort to behead organized civil society through the way its Council was constituted by appointing famous individuals such as the late Betinho (a national figure and leader of IBASE, a large development NGO) or singer Gilberto Gil or Denise Dourado, member of the women's NGO Temis, calling upon them as individuals and not in their quality as members of organized sectors of society (de Oliveira 1995).

A similar approach was used with regard to the women's health movement when Margareth Arilha, a long-time feminist and member of the PSDB, was not accepted as Coordinator of the Women and Child Health Division of the Health Ministry when she was suggested by the women's movement (or part of it). However, she was later appointed to the *Conselho Nacional de Saúde* (National Health Council). She was not supposed to consult with anybody in the movement and she did not. She was appointed as Margareth Arilha, an individual, and not as a representative of the movement.

The inclusion of formerly oppositional individuals in the state is not without problems. Dryzek (1996) warns us that "the history of democratization indicates that pressures for greater democracy almost always emanate from oppositional civil society, rarely or never from the state itself" (1996: 476). This contention needs to be taken seriously and we will see, as in the case of Chile, that the inclusion of feminists in the state indeed has proven beneficial yet problematic for the movement. Yet, as Dryzek himself agrees, "there may be some democratic gain in this entry" (ibid.) and as I have argued earlier, ignoring the promotion of gender equity through the arena of the state is not a reasonable option. Therefore, a dual strategy of involvement with the state while maintaining a strong autonomous movement outside the state applying pressure seems most appropriate (Alvarez 1990, Rai 1996).

Such a strategy became crucial for Latin American feminism when, in the mid to late 1980s, state women's machineries were put in place with the coming to power of parties in opposition to military rule. Brazil's was one of the first: the National Council for Women's Rights (*Conselho Nacional pelos Direitos da Mulher*, hereafter CNDM) was created in 1985. Maintaining a two-pronged strategy has proven quite a challenge, as Georgina Waylen (1996) has showed in the case of Chile and its state machinery (SERNAM). She shows that the "migration of feminists to the state" has weakened the movement by beheading it. This in turn has weakened SERNAM's position because it needs a strong autonomous movement to bolster its claims by putting pressure on the political parties which form the government.

In Brazil, Alvarez (1990) reported similar complaints on the part of activists regarding the CNDM during the Sarney years (1985-1989). When I conducted my first research in 1992, under the Collor administration, such fears had receded because the CNDM had turned into a partisan puppet in which feminist activists were absent (Lebon 1993). The CNDM only found

renewed vitality and legitimacy with the movement once the conservative government of Fernando Collor de Mello was ousted from office (in September 1992) and especially since the coming to power of the Cardoso<sup>8</sup> team. In 1995, a veteran Rio feminist, Rosiska Darcy de Oliveira, was appointed as head of this renewed Council, whose members are leading members of the movement --most of them professionalized activists. It will be interesting to see what will happen now.

Maintaining a dual strategy is also challenging because the space of maneuvering afforded feminists working in institutional settings is limited: they face much opposition and thus "the greatest space to achieve change has existed on those issues which are considered least controversial" (Waylen 1996: 112). Sonia Alvarez, in her latest research in the summer of 1997, noted a tendency to "discursive accommodation" on the part of some Latin American feminists active in policy arenas: they use as their own the language developed as a result of consensus-building with still often male-dominant and conservative public authorities. Her most striking example is that of the legislation on "intra-familial violence" which Chilean feminists struggled to pass and which "unquestionably represents an important step in combating violence against women. However, the watered-down law that ultimately prevailed centers on "strengthening the family," prescribes efforts at "family reconciliation," recommends "couples' therapy" and largely ignores the gendered power relations so central to feminist understandings of the causes and remedies for this dramatic and systematic violation of women's human rights" (1997:18-19). Most important in terms of promoting a strong women's movement is that

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<sup>8</sup> An important role was played in this revival by rising expectations linked to the presence of Ruth Corrêa Leite Cardoso, the President's wife, a respected feminist scholar and activist. She headed the official Brazilian delegation to Beijing. Needless to say, her very existence has also exacerbated tensions between feminists along political lines.

policy advocates focusing on the political dimension of policy work often fail to see its cultural dimension: they have a role to play in generating debate in the larger public opinion, which contributes to redefining gender roles and the generally accepted meanings, and therefore practices, of the naturalized cultural order of things (in Bourdieu's terms: *doxa*). These redefinitions need to be made as transgressive as possible in the sense of gender equity. This process of redefinition is hampered by "discursive accommodations" (Alvarez 1997).

In other words, interaction with the state is fraught with difficulties for feminist activists, as many of those involved are often keenly aware. Yet, it is important, especially in the condition of relative consolidation in which Latin American states presently find themselves, which still afford some maneuvering space for change.

#### Conclusion: Bridging the Local/International and the Political/Cultural

The Brazilian activists in charge of the preparation for Beijing tried to revive (*resgatar*) the solidarity-building, mobilizing power of the movement: the preparation for Beijing brought about a series of seminars and debates in the whole State of São Paulo, as well as a state and a national conference. They were also determined to, and to a large extent succeeded in, turning this international event into a remobilizing effort of the women's movement at home. The meetings organized were still of a different nature than *encontros* since one of their major goals was to come up with a document that would represent the position of Brazilian women, in all their diversity, in Beijing. The organizers of the national conference felt that they managed to coalesce the cultural<sup>9</sup> and the political dimensions of the movement. They wrote:

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<sup>9</sup> They do tend, however, to understand culture in the sense of "high culture."

The National Conference, in approving proposals and celebrating the seriousness of the process, became a benchmark and the performances elaborated by the state delegations and the artists especially invited for this event, became a demonstration of why feminism, beyond a political movement, is a cultural movement concerned with the material and spiritual necessities of human beings. (*Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras* 1995:3)

The impression of some participants point at some of the difficulties encountered. An

Afro-Brazilian woman trade-unionist told me:

It would have been good to change a bit for a more dynamic methodology, which involves the women more...you could have groups too, but with a dynamic which makes people participate and talk. I think it is good to have groups, but not all speak and so, with 700 people, I think we should use some things that we used in the past...we should use the techniques used in workshops. These things work! Maybe just having various themes and each person chooses one she likes, to have a greater participation of the women, especially our grassroots women who are not used to talk but to do things, do you understand? That way, you give these women this opportunity. With the form...this dynamic we used today, those who speak more are us who have been active in the movement for some time already.

Despite the trade-offs that result from its hybrid form, the conference definitely marked an important step forward in combining the different dimensions of the women's movement. Beyond working on both the cultural and the political front and at the local and the international level, it was particularly important for those movement participants who find themselves more and more engaged in institutionalized politics not to let go of what they have learned by working at the grassroots.

Institutionalized feminism has meant great legislative and real gains for Brazilian women, such as the maternity rights secured for women workers by the CNDM in the 1988 constitution, the establishment of special police stations for women victims of domestic violence, the establishment of commissions investigating maternal deaths (*comitês de morte materna*), or more recently the bill ensuring the actual implementation in public hospitals of the 1940 law which allows abortion in cases of threat to the life of the mother, rape or incest. The

documents emerging from the Beijing, and especially the Cairo conference, with which Brazilian feminists have been particularly involved and which have been ratified by the Brazilian government, have allowed feminist policy advocates to pressure the Congress not to veto the afore-mentioned bill. Moreover, involvement in the international women's movement, among other things, has also strengthened ties between feminist activists throughout Latin America and in the world. It has accelerated the process of participation, in local Latin American feminist movements, of Afro-Latin American, lesbians, disabled women and indigenous women, "emboldened by global discourses on 'diversity'" and by contacts with activists with similar backgrounds in other parts of the world, with alternative feminist discourses (Alvarez 1997: 7).

In their effort to reach a consensus and win legislative battles by learning to speak the same language as legislators and diplomats, in order to be understood and listened to, feminists must be careful not to give way to a "*feminismo aplanaltado*"<sup>10</sup> or "*feminismo de blazer*" (flattened feminism or feminism in blazer) (Garcia Castro 1998). Like the women from *Movimento e Saúde* they must find a way of creating the circle, of changing the dynamics of politics as usual, of resisting "discursive accommodation" outside of policy arenas, or genuinely engaging in the "critical-negotiating posture in relation to the State" that Virginia Vargas, prominent Peruvian feminist, advocates (Alvarez 1998b:8). It is of course a tall order considering their limited numbers and the opposition they are facing. They can only do so with

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<sup>10</sup> Mary Garcia Castro calls this feminism "*pouco ondulado*" (with few waves). She says it is the feminism "which has been welcome at the United Nations, adopted by international agencies and by the most diverse governments regardless of their record on authoritarian and excluding practices". She is also making a play on words since the Planalto also refers to the location of the Brazilian Congress and presidential offices in Brasília.



the help of a vibrant autonomous movement pressuring the authorities and by constantly resourcing themselves through dialogue with feminists located in other wings of the women's movement social movement field.

## CHAPTER 8

### UP THE PURSE'S STRINGS: NGO RELATIONS WITH DONOR AGENCIES

The emphasis on policy-centered work was a choice made by some women's groups as they expected to promote more effective changes through their involvement in the political sphere after the return to democracy. They thus needed organizational forms better-suited to this type of work and opted for more formalized and professionalized organizations. Yet, as we have seen, the formalization and professionalization of movement organizations also stimulate their institutionalization. Major players in the professionalization of women's groups and the larger NGO community are the international donor agencies who finance NGO projects. Donor agencies are of many kinds and their objectives in financing women's groups are varied and changing. In fact, it was difficult for me to make generalizations. Yet, several key findings emerge from my research: 1) financing agencies tend to foster the formalization and specialization of movement organizations, and the strengthening of power differentials within the movement because they tend to finance already established organizations, 2) they tend to foster a consensual/negotiation position on the part of the organizations they finance, while offering less support to mobilizing and protest activities.

In this chapter, I present evidence of how donors, intentionally and unintentionally, influence women's groups in these ways. I let Brazilian feminist activists speak about their relationship with financing agencies. Women's groups have been able to present some resistance to donors' directives, both collectively and in a more subtle manner. I also present

the problems resulting from the inherent power differential between these two actors.

However, I will begin the chapter by presenting the agencies which finance women's health groups and the recent changes in this international cooperation landscape which have translated in the difficulties and sacrifices on the part of Brazilian feminist NGOs.

### Donor Agencies: A Diverse Community

The agencies which finance São Paulo's women's health groups form a diverse community. Still, the overwhelming majority of the funding comes from nongovernmental sources, as is true for the majority of Brazilian NGOs (Fernandes 1994, Landim & Cotrim 1996). In fact, the proportion of nongovernmental funding is higher for the women's NGOs I worked with than for NGOs in general: In 1993, 75.9% of ABONG members funding came from the nongovernmental international cooperation sector. This figure was 97% and 91% for SPT and F&S respectively. The rest of their financing consisted in money for services rendered (Landim & Cotrim 1996). This means that these women's health NGOs received little funding from multilateral/bilateral agencies. This is generally true for most Brazilian women's NGOs with a few exceptions (see Table 8.1).

This situation appeared to be changing somewhat. By the time I conducted my research, F&S was also receiving financing from a World Bank/Brazilian Ministry of Health project for women and AIDS. This project did not, however, represent a substantial percentage either in terms of F&S budget or personnel time. The Casa da Mulher, Sande and other women's health groups were similarly financed under the same project.

Table 8-1: Types of Financing for some Brazilian Women's NGOs  
(In percentage of total budget, numbers for 1993)

	Int'l Nongovernmental Cooperation	International Governmental	Sale of Products & Services
CEMINA	20	80♣	0
CEPIA	65.5	34.5	0
CFEMEA	76.5	23.5	0
SOS CORPO	95	0	5
REDEH	100	0	0
SPT	97	0	3
F&S	91	0	9
All ABONG members*	75.9	7	6.9

Source: Landim & Cotrim 1996

Note: \* Other sources for ABONG members are Brazilian government agencies 3.2%, Individual donations 2.4%, Corporate entities 1.2%, Others 1.4%

♣ Cemina runs radio programs on women's issues. Why its financing sources are so different from other groups is not clear.

Nongovernmental international cooperation agencies can be classified in two broad categories: there are American private foundations with their origins in secular, corporate philanthropy, such as The Ford Foundation or the MacArthur Foundation, and European nongovernmental agencies --many of which have religious affiliations-- such as ICCO, Cebemo, Novib, Memisa and ZWD (Netherlands); Christian Aid (UK) or Misereor (Germany).<sup>1</sup> Brazilian feminist NGOs have had links to these European NGOs for a long time. North American foundations represent a more recent trend for women's activist groups, although Ford has been supporting Brazilian NGOs, such as the well-known research/thinktank CEBRAP for over 30 years, helping opposition intellectuals to pursue their activities during the dictatorship, as well as research by feminist academics.

<sup>1</sup> Brian Smith (1990) has written a detailed account of the differences between these two types of donor agencies, tracing their origins, history and visions, from World War II up until 1990, as well as the political and cultural reasons behind these differences.

A few northern feminist NGOs, all US-based, have also appeared on the scene, such as the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW), the Global Fund for Women, the International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group (IRRRAG) and the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC). Corporate financing<sup>2</sup> is slowly weaving its way in: in 1994, F&S received funding from the Levi-Strauss company for a small project on AIDS prevention. Leilah Landim has noted that "significant changes have begun to occur [...] during the last two or three years, when new corporate institutions have begun to appear in the arena of nonprofit private action for public benefit" (1996b: 339). She mentions the recent creation of GIFE - Grupo de Institutos e Fundações Empresariais (Group of Corporate Institutes and Foundations).

Tables 8-2 shows the sources of financing of the four groups who were part of this research. While MU and The Casa deal with a limited number of donors, SPT, and especially F&S, have to juggle numerous financing sources. Note that SPT relies mostly on European agencies, while F&S has more links to North American philanthropic and feminist donors.

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<sup>2</sup> The rapprochement with the corporate world, improbable in an earlier period, is also indicated by the fact that Avon Company paid for training by feminist activists from the São Paulo's women's rights council (CECF): Avon staff will spend 10 minutes at the beginning of each session with their retailers talking about women's health issues, especially breast cancer prevention.

Table 8-2: Groups' Sources of Financing in 1995

<b>Mulheres Unidas</b>	<b>Casa da Mulher</b>	<b>SPT</b>	<b>F&amp;S</b>
MacArthur	MacArthur	ICCO	MacArthur
	Health Ministry	MacArthur	Ford
		Christian Aid	Global Fund for Women
		Memisa	Carlos Chagas Foundation
		ZWD	ICRW
			ICCO
			IRRRAG
			Levi-Strauss
			Health Ministry

### Latin American NGOs in Crisis

There is no doubt among activists and observers alike, that resources from donor agencies for Latin American NGOs have become more scarce in recent years. The Brazilian magazine *Veja* announced in 1995 that 86% of NGOs were cutting employees and programs (31 May, 1995 cited in Hochstetler 1997:17). Before getting into how such cuts have affected the groups with which I worked, I want to consider the causes of this financial crisis.

It is not clear whether there has been a straightforward decline in non-governmental financing for the region<sup>3</sup> (as is claimed by many Brazilian NGOs and seems to be confirmed by Landim & Cotrim's finding of a small, relative decline of available resources between 1990 and 1993<sup>4</sup>), or whether funding has been increasing at a slower pace than in the 70s and early 80s, coupled with an increase in the number of groups being funded. The latter was the explanation

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<sup>3</sup> As far as governmental aid is concerned, the decline is clear: the total resources, in 1993, from the North to the South, went down by 6 billion dollars, compared to previous years, from 62 to 56 billion dollars (Reich 1995).

<sup>4</sup> 31 million dollars for 121 ABONG members in 1993 versus 28 million dollars for 102 organizations in 1990 (Ladim & Cotrim 1996:xvii).

by a program officer of a German nongovernmental agency (EZE) at a meeting between Brazilian NGOs and two donor agencies (Médias ONGs 1993).

One thing is certain: women's NGOs in Brazil and Latin America in general are definitely feeling the pinch. So much so that they decided to stage a silent protest inside the official forum of the Fourth UN Conference on Women in Beijing in September of 1995, asking for increased funding for Latin American women's issues. I identified three main reasons for NGOs' current financial predicament. One is geopolitical in nature, one has to do with economic policies and the third is linked to cultural changes.

#### Shift in Funding Policies of European Nongovernmental Donors

European agencies have been shifting their funding priorities towards Eastern Europe and Africa. As Ana Maria Doimo points out "One notes, in particular, that North-American cooperation has increased considerably for Latin American NGOs as European agencies started prioritizing Eastern European countries due to their political opening " (1994:21). Beyond this geopolitical shift, the priorities of European nongovernmental donor agencies have traditionally been oriented by issues of needs (*carência*) or politics, rather than strict cost/benefit calculations. It follows that Latin American countries' return to formal democracy made them less appealing to agencies while African and Asian countries are seen as needing more assistance (Fernandes 1994:84).

Moreover, in recent years, European governments and public opinion have been putting pressure on their cooperation agencies, questioning the support to Latin America's development considering that funds have been "poured down the drain" for 20 years and that

the situation does not seem to get any better. Wolfgang Kaiser, representative of EZE explained it in these terms to Brazilian NGOs:

Then questions started being raised by governmental agencies, the media, public opinion: what you are doing, these philanthropic projects? Are they political interventions in a foreign country? Can we trust the way you are allocating the funds? what are the results in concrete terms? Are the results better than those of governmental cooperation? (Médias ONGs 1993:15)

NGO leaders are well aware of these policy shifts. Ana Maria (F&S) was quite clear on the subject:

What they are saying is the following: that the agencies have been investing in Latin America for 20 years and that poverty has not changed one bit. This I have heard a number of times [...] Now, in these more recent changes, what the European agencies and the World Congress of Churches are doing, they are redirecting the money to Africa, to Eastern Europe and so on.

#### The Shock of the "*Plano Real*"

The internal economic policies of Itamar Franco's government (1993-1994) and more specifically the introduction of a new currency linked to the dollar, *o Real (R\$)*, in July 1994 (after a transition period starting in late 1993), which brought about a much lower inflation rate, dealt severe blows to NGOs' budgets on several accounts. The *Plano Real*<sup>5</sup> did lower inflation but it anchored the Brazilian currency to the US dollar. This new policy translated into an extremely unfavorable exchange rate for the grant money which NGOs received in dollars and other hard currencies. For example, using January 1995 as a base line, the revenue received by NGOs in dollars in January 1997 fell by 35.8%; the revenue received in Dutch Florins fell by

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<sup>5</sup> On the *Plano Real* and more generally on Brazil's political economy in the 1990s see Korzeniewicz and Macias 1998.



47.7%; and the revenue received in Deutschmarks fell by 58.9% (Rosangela Paz, ABONG Assistant Director; personal communication).

Moreover, NGOs used to invest the part of their grant which they did not use immediately in order to generate further income. The changes in interest rates that accompanied the *Plano Real* no longer provided this possibility. Finally, as a result of the conversion from *Cruzeiros* to *Reais*, prices were set higher in *Reais* than they had been in *Cruzeiros*. Therefore, the budgets NGOs had prepared for 1994-1995 underestimated their actual financial needs.

### Change in Organizational Culture in European Agencies

European donor NGOs were born out of a similar ethical-political milieu as Brazilian NGOs, that is leftist intellectuals and progressive church-linked groups heralding anti-colonialism and *terceiro-mundismo*.<sup>6</sup> Focusing on the Brazilian situation, Leilah Landim writes:

European and Canadian agencies which are of interest to us here were born rather independently from their governments and especially starting in the 60s (with a strong influence of FAO's campaign against Hunger committees) intensified their relations with trade-unions and political activist groups in their own countries. Hence they developed ideas and actions criticizing the international policies of their governments. (1993a:211)

Landim also emphasizes how Latin exiles integrated these agencies and helped redefine their policies. They considered themselves to be activists. They hoped to change the world and created NGOs in order to build solidarity across the globe (Fernandes 1994:30). They also

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<sup>6</sup> A term which has no English translation but means activism in favor of changes in the South and in the North in order to allow for a change in power relations between them.

engaged in education about the structural causes of Third World poverty in their own countries (Smith 1990).

Yet, aside from greater internal economic problems on the continent, the political culture in Western Europe and within these nongovernmental donors has changed, as a result of the rise of consumerism and of the desire for greater personal gratification after the cooling off of leftist activism following the collapse of the socialist regimes in Eastern Europe and the former USSR. Moreover, the generation of young leftists of the 60s have moved on to a new life phase more oriented to family. This was most clearly expressed by Marieke, a program officer of NOVIB (Dutch secular donor NGO). In her unabashed *Portuñol* (Spanish-Portuguese linguistic mix) she explained:

For example, in Holland, 10 years ago it was normal that your profession also be your social life. It is maybe linked to the fact of being young, of traveling easily, of not having a family and then the years go by, people start having a family and want a private life. And your work, being voluntary, being paid, is no longer your only life. N - I think that it is something that I have seen here in the movement as well.. because the women are becoming older, no? So they want to spend more time with their family. Marieke - No, no, I know... but this is something that I saw in Holland, this is a change of culture in Holland.

N - Ah I see that people want more of a personal life.

Marieke - Yes, and it is something which is happening concomitantly with the professionalization of organizations and this forces us to become more efficient, because in general, our objectives do not diminish. So the same amount of work you used to do in 60 hours, now you have to do in 40.

Marieke had just explained to me that because of the professionalization process and the current lifestyle and cultural changes, people were no longer willing to work 60 hours a week or to work at whatever hour of the day or on Sundays.

This shift in European political culture is also reflected in donors' organizational cultures, and has notable consequences for organizations in Brazil. A more

bureaucratic/technocratic culture has set in as opposed to a more politically-minded

framework. Again Marieke of Novib explains that:

Before we were also much more solidary, we had a political perspective and everybody knew that capacity-building and popular education were very important. So we were financing many of these projects, and many other types of projects which were important, without really thinking about how to measure the results. Then with professionalization and with less solidarity... because in a way, Novib, with its professionalization became less solidary because some people joined the organization more as a career option than with commitment. So this also changes a bit the organization as a whole...

N - Gee!! That's a surprise!...

Marieke - Wages at Novib are not high so those who want to earn a lot of money, it is better for them to look for a firm...

N - Of course. So it is a similar dynamic as among women's NGOs...

Marieke - Yes. It is not only because of solidarity that we are working, we also have a certain level of professionalism.

This change in organizational and political culture of European donor agencies has not gone unnoticed or unchallenged by NGOs:

Historically there has been a change in the quality of the relations with agencies. In the past, the majority of NGOs started working with a political option of social transformation. The relationship between a large number of agencies and NGOs in the South was very personal and was fundamentally characterized by a relationship between political partners. There was a variety of relations which were explicitly inserted in the same political network. Today, managers of agencies have a "technical" profile. As a result, the perspective and language are different. It is certain that we cannot (neither do we want to) go back to the activist life of 30 years ago. But we cannot put political options in quotation marks. This is fundamental: these options are part and parcel of the priorities of medium size NGOs. (Médias ONGs 1993:18)

This more bureaucratic/technocratic culture has direct consequences as to how money is being disbursed to southern counterparts. Basically, the accountability requirements of agencies have increased. Marieke explains further:

[It is not only because of solidarity that we are working, we also have a certain level of professionalism.] So we are now paying more attention to what is happening. It is not like before when we said 'Well great! We give you the money and you start working and one day we will meet so you can tell us what has been done with the money and that's fine! That's fine!' I am exaggerating a bit, but...but in some cases, for more than

20 years, 30 years, it was like this. We visited a country looking for organizations we could help and they told us what they wanted to do and the director walked around with the checkbook in his pocket and would give them the check saying 'send us some information someday'. It was like this in some cases that we spent our money. Today it's no longer like this.

One major factor that has worked in favor of this reorientation of European nongovernmental aid, is the questioning they have recently suffered by European governments and public opinion. As Wolfgang Kaiser (EZE) argued in the seminar mentioned above:

Faced with all this questioning, agencies have often had difficulties in explaining the impact of their own work, of the priorities which are more related to qualitative, social changes than to quantitative [...] This is where the questions the Agencies are asking to their partners are coming from: what can you tell us about your work, about its impact, about the results of your activities? (Médias ONGs 1993:16)

It is clear that European agencies are modifying their accountability requirements. For Brent, a US foundation representative, this change came as "a shock because the European donors for a long time did a lot of sort of solidarity funding. I used to work for IAF [Interamerican Foundation] and it was really funny! I mean, I'd see the same project, the way the proposal was written for the Europeans and the way it was written for the Americans!" With a hint of sarcasm in his voice he added:

The ones for the Europeans, you know, were all about reversing authoritarianism, fighting for social justice. You know.... it was a sewing cooperative for 20 women in a poor community but they had this real political wrapping to it. But now, the Europeans have been pressing a lot more for strategic planning. I mean, they have actually been sending over... people to do strategic planning with organizations, to help organizations identify their goals.

In fact, European agencies are now following the model of American agencies, which have always been insistent on accountability and impact assessments of projects. American philanthropic foundations have their origin in the corporate world, which might partially explain their emphasis on cost-benefit analysis. Moreover, although they do not receive money from

the US government, these entities have nevertheless been under the scrutiny of public opinion and of the US Congress which regulates and partially monitors their activities mainly through tax exemption legislations.<sup>7</sup> Finally, US culture is generally more thoroughly permeated by market principles and its cost/benefit calculations (Wolfe 1989).

Daniel Reich nicely summed up the current trend of international cooperation in Latin America: "We are in a new era of change. The 60s was the decade of development and of the 'Green Revolution', the 70s that of solidarity. The 80s was that of partnership, and now, in the 90s, what is most salient is professionalism, impact and results" (Reich 1995:1). Such changes in international cooperation, the more stringent accountability requirements that accompany them, coupled with the diversion of funding towards Eastern Europe and Africa and the negative impact of the *Plano Real* have affected Brazilian NGOs deeply.

### Bitter Consequences For NGOs

The financial difficulties encountered by Brazilian NGOs have repercussions both for the whole organization as well as for individual members. In March 1995, SPT reduced the weekly workload of its technical staff from 28 to 24 hours because it could not afford any wage increase to accompany inflation. The organization's health plan and any auxiliary support were also cut down, except for support for child care expenses. In July 1995, SPT staff went

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<sup>7</sup> After a series of congressional hearings, in the late 60s, over tax abuses and potentially "disruptive" activities of foundations, new nonprofit tax regulations were passed. Nielsen writes "their [large foundations] typically conservative boards have developed a new preoccupation with the possible reaction of Congress and the Internal Revenue Service to their grant decisions" (1972:20). See also Goulden 1971 on same issue. Simon (1988) reports on continued controversies in the Reagan era and on the various limitations imposed by the nonprofit tax law on philanthropic activities.

without pay for one month while they were waiting for the cash advance a financing agency had promised them. Staff members who were leaving the organization were not replaced. As a result, SPT had a technical staff of 10 when I started the research in 1994, By August 1996, it was down to 6. F&S had not gotten to such a critical point but by the time I was leaving in October 1995, they were discussing ways to reduce their wages. Throughout all these difficulties, care was taken to limit the consequences for the administrative staff and to maintain their rights as employees. Nevertheless, at SPT, their hours had to be cut down as well. Tiao, SPT's maintenance specialist, remarked to me as I was asking him how things were going that it was difficult because of the financial situation at SPT but that "everybody was in the same boat."

To deal with the crunch and an insecure future, a number of members engaged in secondary activities: Janaina (F&S) opened a clothing store, Marlene (F&S) started giving English lessons (although this was also a result of changes in her personal situation), Rosimeire started another job on Saturdays. Deise (SPT) shared her one room apartment with another woman and started selling home-made granola. Paulo (administrative staff at SPT) took evening classes to be eligible for a specialized education job. By the time I left, three members of SPT and one of F&S had decided to go back to university to earn a degree while still working for the NGO. Although it was not the primary motivator, financial difficulties might have been an extra incentive to gain a formal stamp of approval for their capacities and knowledge, thus enabling them to switch jobs more easily.

Clearly, these individual difficulties are reflected at the level of the organization with an overly worried and overworked personnel. Survival of the organization as a whole was a greater concern for its leaders. As Noemi of a São Paulo Black women's NGO, one day

explained to another NGO activist, they were not going to abandon the ship as it sank. But they knew that they would be losing a lot of good people in the process.

At the organizational level, one consequence of the crisis is that NGO leaders spend an increasing amount of time searching for funds, writing project proposals and reports and are more concerned with the assessment of results in order to reflect positively for future proposals. As Ana Maria (F&S) puts it :

In general, the problem I see [with agencies] is that to live off financing is extremely unstable, extremely draining. It is an enormous waste of time and energy, you are constantly writing projects, always asking for money, always negotiating. Emotionally it is draining. I know because here I am the one who does it most of the time, emotionally it is extremely draining and it is a waste of time. [...] The fact that you have to continuously be looking for funding, be negotiating, be showing them, the agencies, that really you are worth their money. It is extremely unpleasant and draining.

The reduced possible sources of funding also mean less leeway to pick and choose agencies from which to receive funding, and projects with which to get involved. By the time I left, F&S was considering writing a grant proposal in the area of education, in which they had not been active so far, because there was money available in that area. Banking on their flexibility and innovative spirit, they were ready to launch into new directions in order to ensure the survival of the organization.

### More Market-like Dynamics

The shortage of money and the increased pressure to demonstrate results, is prompting NGOs further in the direction of corporate dynamics, both internally and externally. Competition between groups, internal monitoring, subcontracting of labor and commodification of movement relations and activities were introduced or reinforced due to these financial difficulties.

Competition between NGOs for funding is understandable and seems to always have been present to a certain extent. For example, as early as 1992 Jacqueline Pitangy, a well-known feminist academic and activist from Rio de Janeiro, organized a meeting for Rio organizations with a particular financing agency. According to a São Paulo NGO leader this was interpreted by the São Paulo women's movement as a gesture to "*desaguar dinheiro no Rio*" (to get money to pour down onto Rio's groups). This activist believes that what really pits São Paulo and Rio feminists against each other is the issue of the relationship and access to the State and international agencies, and not the regional antagonism which is well-known to students of Brazilian culture. Similarly, an agency program officer, recounted "I have had a conversation [with women's NGOs], I've had a couple really, where the argument was not 'here is our project, here is a good idea we want you to fund' but the argument was 'you gave them that much money, we want that much more'. That was the principal argument and it's not acceptable." Of course this type of behavior is not anything special to women's NGOs. This officer recalled being horrified by the infighting of NGOs focused on HIV prevention and losing her professional cool in the process. She ended up telling them: "you are organized to fight a disease yet you are spending your resources, your time, your money to come here and fight one another. I just find it disgusting."

However, the present crisis definitely gave a more acute sense of the competition, even among São Paulo's groups. I heard one NGO activist from Rede Mulher tell other activists that she wondered how many groups could survive in São Paulo. During a staff meeting, Nara of SPT told her staff that groups working in the area of women's health needed to define very clearly what their specialty (*especialidade*) was if they wanted to secure funding, considering the large number of groups that exist. Another NGO member mentioned the fact that relations



between groups were not always good despite strong affection (*ligação afetiva*) between individuals. She mentioned the recent IRRRAG project which brought together a number of the most important women's health groups in Brazil. Throughout the whole process, a game of exclusion/inclusion was at play between groups: "The version that we heard from ...the people from X is that the people from Y had suggested that we do not participate in the project. And, according to the people of Y, that the people of X were the ones who suggested that we don't participate!" What she did not mention in this whole episode, is the way SPT was kept out until the very last moment, despite the fact that the IRRRAG research was going to interview women with which SPT had been working for years. She went on to explain that, at a later date, the news spread that this project really did not have that much money, and then: "people became less enthusiastic, to the point where there were a series of logistical problems at the Carlos Chagas Foundation. And then there was a rumor that the project had no money. Then there was not even anybody to coordinate the project."

Greater internal monitoring also results from this financial crisis. A good example is Nara's injunction during a staff meeting that it would be necessary for SPT staff to start thinking not only in terms of hours worked but in terms of tasks (*tarefas*) to be completed. She asked each person to identify what would be the task to which she would commit until the end of the year. She said it would be a way to work against their usual slow pace (*a nossa lentidão*). We have discussed in Chapter 4 the role of the crisis in the possible introduction of subcontracting, individualized rewards and career plans in these originally collectivist organizations.

Social movements are born outside of the private sector. Not only are they nonprofit but commitment and value-rationality are typically driving the behavior of participants. The

very availability of donor money contributed to the commodification of movement activities, to setting a price on movement activities which were earlier done "for the cause" or in solidarity with others. Needless to say, the financial crisis that NGOs are going through and the general economic difficulties Brazilians are facing, are pushing in the same direction. "Nobody wants to do anything for free anymore!" This was a recurring refrain among volunteer activists. It was also an exaggeration. F&S and SPT activists conducted a number of workshops with no strings attached and without links to any particular project, in particular around the 8 March celebrations. Nevertheless, commodification of movement relations and activities is occurring.

For some time now feminists, in NGOs and otherwise, have been charging fees to municipal or state administrations whenever they have provided them with consultant advice or gender awareness training. As they rightly point out, they will not work for the government for free! These days however, some NGOs have started charging other social movement groups, including popular feminist groups, at professional consultant rates. A feminist NGO charged The *Casa* 200R\$ for a one-afternoon seminar on gender held by two women in March 1995. Although The *Casa* was satisfied with the content of the seminar, they found the bill overly steep.

Participants to workshops now sometimes have to give a contribution: Clara, a young feminist and lesbian activist, said she and other participants paid some 20 or 30 R\$ for a workshop on sexuality and AIDS organized by a feminist NGO. Even radical feminists who would not touch a professionalized organization with a ten-foot pole told *Mulheres Unidas* that they would appreciate being paid for a seminar on documentation if the participants could afford it. They would do the seminar for free otherwise.

The increased market logic is also reflected by the fact that organizations make sure they set prices for their services no lower than what other groups charge. I was surprised at first to hear an NGO activist commenting that they should find out how much another NGO was charging municipal authorities for a gender training for which they were submitting a proposal, so that they did not offer a lower price. At first, it seemed that the NGO was trying to reap as much benefit from the training as it could. Later, though, I realized that on the other hand, this could be interpreted as a gesture to protect NGOs from slipping into price competition and dumping practices.

Altogether the diminishing resources available to NGOs are exacerbating the more "corporate-like" features of NGOs, making it more difficult for members and NGO leaders to negotiate their hybrid identity as social movement organizations. It is likely to increase hierarchization within NGOs and competition between them, as well as to accelerate the commodification of movement activities. Despite these shrinking resources, women's NGOs are still overwhelmingly dependent on international cooperation agencies for their financial survival. The next sections will probe further into the goals of agencies that finance women's groups, and how women's groups are influenced by this financing, but also resist this influence.

### Objectives of International Agencies

"The Europeans are obsessed with poverty! The Americans with numbers!" exclaimed a feminist NGO leader, making no mystery of her frustration with the situation.

Agencies differ not only in their geographical and historical origins. They also vary in their methodology and in their basic philosophy as I have discussed earlier. It is not a surprise if they also exhibit a number of different goals when they finance feminist organizations. In the

following paragraphs I wish to detail further what these goals are, based on policy documents of various organizations collected during fieldwork<sup>8</sup> and on interviews of agency representatives.

### From Efficiency to Empowerment

Naila Kabeer (1994) reviews the various approaches to women and development issues and how they arose. Drawing on Buvinic (1983) and Moser (1989) she distinguishes between the welfare, efficiency, equity and empowerment approaches to gender and development. The earliest, *welfare*, approach considered women primarily as mothers and wives, disregarding their productive contribution which justified their exclusion from mainstream development efforts. Women's productive role was finally recognized in the 70s. Since the 80s, on a backdrop of increased reliance on market forces, where women are seen as "the new micro-entrepreneurs," the *efficiency* argument emerged ( i.e. including women in development is necessary because it will ensure a better outcome of development efforts) and has remained prevalent among development officials (Kabeer 1994:4-8). Seeking to transform gender and power relations, Kabeer's *equity* argument involves acknowledging differences between men and women in terms of needs, priorities and possibilities, with an attention for social justice and basic needs, and planning their participation in development efforts accordingly (ibid.: 85-87). According to Kabeer, some mainstream development agencies have acknowledged the equity arguments "for meeting women's practical gender needs within the existing division of

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<sup>8</sup> I conducted participant observation in the seminar entitled "Development Cooperation Relations and Gender Politics: Experiences and Perspectives from Brazil" held October 25-27, 1995 in Recife, Pernambuco. During this seminar I also had a chance to interview program officers of various donor agencies.

resources and responsibilities, [but] few are prepared to address the underlying inequalities frequently associated with this division"(1994:91). The last approach, which is most transgressively transformational is the *empowerment* approach, which has "yet to be taken seriously by the official development agencies"(1994:5). Based on the notion of the need to "build on 'the power within', as a necessary adjunct to improving their [women and other subordinated groups] ability to control resources, to determine agendas and make decisions" (1994:229) the empowerment approach relies on processes of consciousness-raising and collective action to achieve gender equity, again coupled with a concern for broader social justice.

According to Kabeer (1994), the efficiency argument is the dominant argument in WID policies in the 1990s. Among the donors involved in this study, this position was most clearly demonstrated by the World Bank. Its pamphlet on gender and development read:

Governments can no longer afford not to invest in women. [...] By directing public resources toward policies and projects that reduce gender inequality, policy-makers not only promote equality but also lay the groundwork for slower population growth, greater labor productivity, a higher rate of human capital formation, and stronger economic growth. (The World Bank 1995:11)

Yet, even the World Bank pays at least lip service to participation: "None of these developments, however, can be sustained without the participation of women themselves. Governments must listen more carefully to women's voices" (ibid.).

The emphasis on efficiency goals is much less obvious for nongovernmental agencies, especially European donors. These agencies' stated larger goal is to fight poverty and injustice, working against their structural causes. The concern with efficiency is present alongside concerns for equity between men and women, and even for the empowerment of women. For example, the Oxfam document on women and development states that : "Oxfam believes that

unless inequalities between men and women be considered, there will be no consolidation of sustainable development and of poverty alleviation." (Oxfam 1993:3). This comes after recognizing the power differentials between men and women and emphasizing the need for equal benefits of development for men and women (*ibid.*: 5).

Furthermore, European nongovernmental agencies' statements reflect the influence of the empowerment-focused work of the Third World Feminist network DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era) (Sen & Grown 1987). DAWN itself is mentioned in the documents of both Novib and ICCO. For example, Novib writes:

The acknowledgment of women's right to self-determination is therefore, more than anything else, a logical characteristic of Novib's general policy. Of course, Novib also acknowledges the substantial contribution that women make to processes of development, and the right for all to equal opportunities. (Novib 1991:3)

As a result of their emphasis on empowerment, at least at the level of discourse, these European nongovernmental agencies emphasize working with popular movements and women's groups. Again, I will use Oxfam as an example: Point 3 of their strategy states that they will:

Support the development of self-confidence by strengthening women's groups/organizations, by promoting dialogues and support networks. [Point 4 reads:] To continue to help and strengthen relations between women's groups and organizations nationally and internationally in order to intensify mutual understanding and solidarity in collective actions. (Oxfam 1993: 6)

Many such agencies have started programs within their own institution through training, workshops and the increasing hiring of women, to ensure a more gender-sensitive culture within their institution.

Northern feminist NGOs generally work along the lines of the empowerment model. For example, the International Women's Health Coalition sees its mission as

to support the building of national and international women's health movements. We make grants, undertake public education, work with a global network of over 4,500 NGOs and individuals, publish books and essays, convene international meetings, and foster alliances among women internationally. (IWHC 1995: inside cover)

Unfortunately, as we have seen in Chapter 6, some of these feminist NGOs' practices are not always up to par with their stated goals. I am not referring to IWHC here.

As far as North-American private philanthropic institutions are concerned, both Ford and MacArthur have hired staff with a clear feminist orientation, which is likely to provide for more of an empowerment approach. More broadly speaking, up until the 60s, North American private voluntary organizations wished to "export the American dreams of self-reliance and democracy", while in the 70s and 80s they turned to a more basic human needs approach (Smith 1990). Although some US organizations work along the lines of the empowerment model, even these --contrary to European agencies-- are not willing to explicitly acknowledge the political nature of their work, emphasizing instead its technical assistance or humanitarian aspect.

Smith reads in this avoidance of political goals a fear of being accused of US interventionism, as well as a consequence of the lack of political awareness, in the US general public, about the structural causes of third world poverty. Indeed, even the institutions which Smith labeled "multiservice institution builders" (1990:118) who do emphasize popular participation and strengthening local community organizations as part of their goals, do not acknowledge the political nature of their work. Smith includes Ford in this category and, considering his defining criteria, I would add MacArthur.

A look at the stated goals of the MacArthur Foundation in its 1996 Report on Activities confirms Smith's analysis:

Several assumptions underlie the policies of the Foundation: that the most important efforts to improve the human condition are those that seek systematic and sustainable change; that human progress requires reducing inequities in the distribution of power and resources; that the healthy, educated, creative individual is an essential instrument of constructive change; and that the Foundation's effectiveness depends in part on its capacity to learn from others, including grantees, about the problems confronting global society. (1996: 2)

My interview with the representative of MacArthur confirmed the fact the Foundation was leery of being branded "imperialistic." When I mentioned that beyond policies, cultural and social authoritarianism should be tackled at the very micro level, he responded that it would be "social and political quicksand" to say up front that they want to change cultural patterns but that:

yes we hope that culture will change, culture... various parts of culture, the inclusion of Black people in Brazil in policy debate, the strengthening of women's voices in policy discussions,... the demarginalization of poor people, of gay people, of indigenous people... these are the culture changes that we think ought to take place.

Ford, according to its representative in Brazil, is less shy about it. When I asked him what the goals of Ford in Brazil were he said:

There is a tremendous concern with values, with people's values... The institution places a lot of emphasis and credence in values such as, again, equal opportunity, tolerance, that there should not be racism or sexism, that there should be free speech.

### Liberal Goals

The notion that democracy, and therefore a strong civil society, goes hand-in-hand with a strong market economy system is a common assumption, which can be reflected in agencies' goals. For example, according to a Ford representative I interviewed, after heavy debates within the foundation, the line in Ford's mission statement about supporting innovative and creative individuals had replaced a statement highlighting the link between democracy and the



development of a strong market economy. Such a political orientation is clearly expressed in other American aid agencies such as Africare whose annual report caught my eye. It states that: "Several important programs of Africare directly support processes of democratization and development of the private sector, as well as, in general, train governments to improve human quality of life" (Africare 1994: 13) [relatório anual de 1994]. Africare does not work with the groups I worked with.

### The Population Control Issue

Traditionally, concerns with population control have been strongly associated with the work of international cooperation with Third world women (Kabeer 1994). Such concerns were present in some of the agencies that finance the groups I worked with but not in others. It was totally absent from the statements by Novib, Cebemo and Oxfam but was present in ICCO's general policy statement on development: The next-to-last item in this document deals with gender. Its last paragraph states that:

In a great number of countries of the South, poverty and demographic increase influence each other negatively. ICCO favors an active demographic policy. However, this policy must be part of a larger vision of the poverty issue and must be oriented towards greater dignity for men and women. (ICCO 1993:15)

As far as American foundations are concerned, the groups I worked with were funded under a "Population Program" in the case of MacArthur, and a "Reproductive Health and Population Program" for Ford. Yet, times have changed, at least for these agencies: there is no talk of population control target numbers, no "demographic imperative"! When identifying her title, the program officer at Ford assured me that as far as she was concerned the population part of the program had been "put in brackets." She had no interest in it. Carmen Barroso, a

leading Brazilian feminist scholar, is now heading MacArthur's Population program. It became clear during my interview with the MacArthur program officer that MacArthur recognizes and wishes to capitalize on the link between women's empowerment and the diminishing number of children they will have. This means that their population policy is based on a broad concern for the welfare of women and their empowerment within the family and society. According to their program officer "the role and status of women comes first" which has important demographic consequences

In sum, women's groups and the nongovernmental agencies that finance them—at least those to whom I had a chance to talk—are not at odds with each other when considering their specified goals: they share the belief that the empowerment of women, or a change in power differentials between women and men, is a possible and necessary change. However, as I will detail in the coming sections, agencies' operational practices do not always reflect their discourse. There is also disagreement as to how such social change is best achieved. There is a distinctive push on the part of agencies, both intentionally and unintentionally, due to operational constraints, towards institutional channels for social change: policy formulation is seen as key, at times at the expense of empowerment through consciousness-raising and local level organizing. As a result, better established, well-known groups, whose members had the necessary cultural and political capital to start with and who have acquired and accumulated experience to deal with elites, are pushed as intermediaries to represent women's interests. There is no doubt that these groups are better positioned than any other traditional actors on the political scene to represent "women" and that they have secured valuable advances for women, but, as I have discussed in chapter 6, they also have different interests and concerns than many of the women they are supposed to represent.

Foster Already Established Organizations with an Advocacy Focus

My interviews with representatives and program officers of the Ford Foundation, the MacArthur Foundation, Novib, Cebemo and Oxfam revealed individuals concerned with the welfare of Brazilian women and of the movement, and in one case obviously frustrated by the weight of their mother organization and keenly aware of some of the contradictions of their work. In fact, my interviews with them qualified more as conversations since I was nearing the end of my stay in Brazil and had started to forge my own opinion on things. I openly confronted them, whenever I sensed an overture, with my concerns and the opinions of the movement actors I had been working with. It turned out that most of these program officers were aware of the very dynamics that neighborhood women decried, although few acknowledged the role played by funding institutions in this situation.

Half of those interviewed (4 out of 8) were Europeans or of European descent. One was African-American, another US Latina, and two were Brazilians of European descent. This is also a more masculine world than that of feminist NGOs, as is to be expected: 3 agency representatives were men.

It came out clearly from these conversations that agency program officers actively search for the "right grant." "It is not sitting around waiting for them to come here" says Donna "hardly anyone does that. Certainly not foundations that have field offices. You actively sort of look for things that are going to be in keeping with the program's goals" Sometimes donors fund projects for which they are being solicited, such as in the case of Novib and Cfemea I will mention later on. This kind of approach might have been more common in the past, maybe when European program officers did not come so often to Brazil. This might explain why I

often heard from NGO leaders that they are the ones who send in the projects which they want to get funded. Some did mention visits by interested donors.

It also came out clearly that all agencies, as we have seen in earlier sections, have their own ideas about what they want to finance and why. This is to be expected. What is less obvious are some of the unintended consequences of the funding process and procedures, such as the necessity for "independent status" of an organization in order to be able to receive funding, the operational push for making larger grants and the time constraints on program officers' schedules. While the first encourages formalization and hierarchization of groups, the last two work in favor of financing better-known and centrally located organizations, who are more likely to engage in institutional politics. This also deepens the gap between the 'elite' of the movement and others.

### Contributing to Formalization and Hierarchization

A group needs to have independent status, i.e. to be registered with the local authorities as a legally recognized entity in order to receive grant money. They need to be able to open a bank account in the organization's name. The Ford Foundation for example, cannot provide "secondary funding"; that means they cannot provide funds for one organization through another. In that sense, donors encourage the formalization of organizations.

An enlightening example is that of the feminist health network: feminist health groups throughout Brazil have been organized into a loosely knit network since 1991, rotating the "secretariat" between different major NGOs. When funds were allocated to the Network by Ford, the Network had to register as an independent organization.

Members had been resisting this formalization in order not to congeal the network into a pyramidal structure. As a program officer commented to me:

You force them to become more professional... in two terms...because now they've got a full-time secretary, they've got three full-time staff members which they are going to be paying...and they'll be buying a computer for the Network, they'll be buying a fax and then that baggage goes where? It's certainly going to create some problems later on. But I think it is inevitable...

She also referred to the inherent power that such an independent body is likely to exert and hence the hierarchization of the Network that might ensue.

We have seen in earlier chapters that the professionalization of social movement organizations tends to stimulate their institutionalization: their move towards institutional politics often at the expense of direct action and empowerment activities since organizations have limited resources. We also discussed that the ability to plan time and resources was a major element in this push towards institutionalization.

This takes us back to financing agencies' emphasis on planning, on funding based on planned activities with a definite budget presented in a project proposal. Planning activities is difficult for social movements who tend to follow the flow of events in the political and social life of the country, as I have discussed in chapter 4. Yet it is essential to secure funding. Nara from SPT told me:

To obtain financing nowadays...the fact that we work mostly with the requests from others [social movement groups] is very good for the movement but is really bad to get an agency to trust us. So, for example, if you manage to prove yourself to an agency, if you build a relationship based on trust, and you send them your work plan without much detail, saying that you are waiting for the requests made by the movement, but you assure them that there will be requests...if you have built a trusting relationship, it is great. But for those with which you want to establish new relations or for some donor agencies...for the Germans and the Americans, it does not work. It can work with the Dutch and the British but for the Germans and the Americans it does not work.

In other words, there is variation from one agency to the next. Yet, the tendency is definitely towards more planning, and this is inimical to the process-oriented nature of social movement organizations.

### Contributing to Institutionalization and Hierarchization

It is easier for donors to spend big lump sums of money on one group than several smaller amounts on several groups, which would allow for more mobilizing activities. In this sense agencies favor already established groups engaging in research and institutional politics who require more money, and deepen the gap between them and newcomers or alternative groups. This is simply because it requires less paperwork and cuts down on staff workload.

Although there is an effort on the part of some agencies to find and finance "diamonds in the rough," as expressed by the MacArthur program officer, doing so requires a number of visits and a workload that is difficult to sustain, according to other program officers such as Donna and Karen:

Donna: This is one of the contradictions here that Karen and I talk about in our work all the time, that your heart kind of breaks at not being able to support certain kinds of things...

Karen: ...some of the smaller and newer groups that really are doing very good work at the grassroots level and really bringing about social change. You know at the very local level. One feels one really can't, you know, support them. In part because they need a lot of attention, a lot of work. That's the sort of project that's very labor-intensive and you don't really have time. There is that component to it and that's a genuine side. I mean, I feel I haven't got the time to go and visit a small group in João Pessoa three times a year. That's what it would take and a lot of to and from until you get the protocol into reasonable shape. Yet, it is heart-wrenching because they are groups that you know, they are perhaps the only representatives [...]

Donna: I mean there is no written rule but basically you don't disburse your million dollars a year that each program officer has to 50 organizations at say \$20,000 each, or much less to 500 organizations at \$2,000 each. You see, there is an imperative to sort of make the money "render" (bear fruit).

Indeed, a look at the Ford and MacArthur annual reports shows that the majority of the grants are for \$40,000 or more (See Tables 7-3, 7-4 and 7-5) except when they aim at financing a particular event. MacArthur's strategy of financing a group for 2 or even 3 years is mitigating this tendency. The MacArthur Program officer I talked to was particularly pleased in 1995 to have been able to make a number of smaller grants and it shows in the 1994 annual report where several groups received \$50,000 over 3 years (Table 8-4). However, the 1996 report shows a return to a pattern of financing well-known institutions for substantial amounts (Table 8-5). A more detailed analysis would be needed to know exactly what is going on. Representatives are aware of the pitfalls of making large disbursements but seem to be working against the structure of the institution itself.

It is also worthy to note that 29 out of the 38 grants made by Ford and MacArthur for 1994 and 1996 are located in Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo, the two largest cities of the country, which harbor most of the best-known and experienced groups in the country. The location of these groups works to their advantage when wanting to work with elites and government authorities.

I have little information about the actual disbursements from European donors since I did not receive the documents I had asked for in writing. Judging from the SPT's budget projections (Table 8-6) it seems that they tend to give smaller amounts.

It is interesting to note that Landim and Cotrim, in their survey of ABONG members found a notable reduction of the number of organizations with a budget of \$30,000 or less among their affiliates: they represented 23.5% of the total in 1990 down to 16.7% in 1993 (1996:xvii). This type of budget denotes a volunteer organization since it would not be

sufficient for a professionalized organization which remunerates its staff (even if the pay is low).

Also reinforcing established groups is donors' "safe bet" policy: donors are more inclined to finance a group if it has already been financed. This is a confirmation that the group can be trusted since another member of the donor community already gave it a seal of approval. This game can take a comical dimension at times, with a slight tinge of inter-donor rivalry. A program officer told me:

Virtually everything that we fund, for example, X will also fund, usually after a week or two (laughter). [...] It's like everything in life, the more money you get, the more money you get, the more money you get... It's not: "oh, they already got funded, why should we... It's this "safe bet" thing. They like to fund things that we open because they know that they must be, you know, ready to take on a large project.

#### "Let's Stand-up and Denounce" Is Out: Influencing Policy-Makers Is In

From a more political standpoint, all of the donors I interviewed are working against the "Let's Stand up and Denounce" position, as one representative put it. This is one of the few generalizations I feel comfortable making about donors. Ana Maria Doimo also noted this tendency, she says: "the pressure on the part of the international cooperation to prevent any "oppositional" position (*a posição do contra*) is palpable" (1994:20). This "let's stand up and denounce" position was very common among social movement groups and even NGOs during and immediately after the dictatorship in Brazil. Now donors want civil society to make constructive propositions to public authorities. For one European donor, this simply means getting groups to be more concrete and precise in their demands to local authorities.



**Table 8-3: Ford Foundation. Grants Awarded to Brazilian Organizations under their Reproductive Health and Population Program, 1994.**

<b>Social science research and training</b>	
State University of Campinas (São Paulo)	672,442
Institute for Studies of Religion (ISER) (Rio)	80,000
<b>Community involvement</b>	
Citizenship, Research, Information and Action (CEPIA) (Rio)	15,000
<b>Dissemination of information</b>	
Grupo Pela VIDDÁ (Rio)	100,000
Institute for Studies of Religion (ISER) (Rio)	12,000
<b>Ethics, law, and policy analysis</b>	
Catholics for Free Choice (Católicas pelo Direito a Decidir)	46,200

Source: 1994 Ford Foundation Annual Report

**Table 8-4: MacArthur Foundation. Grants Awarded to Brazilian Organizations under their Population Program, 1994.**

<b>Women's Reproductive Health</b>	
Associação de mulheres do Grajau (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	80,000
Casa da Mulher Lilith (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	50,000
Centro Brasileiro de Análise e Planejamento (Cebap) (over 2 years) (São Paulo)	155,000
Centro das Mulheres do Cabo (Pernambuco)	50,000
Centro Informação Mulher (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	50,000
Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	240,000
Comissão de Cidadania e Reprodução (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	240,000
Geledés, Instituto da Mulher Negra (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	360,000
Pro-Mulher (over three years) (São Paulo)	50,000
União de Mulheres do Município de São Paulo (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	75,000
<b>Communications and Popular Education</b>	
Centro Feminista de Estudos e Assessoria (Cfemea) (over 3 years) (Brasília)	300,000
Centro Informação Mulher (São Paulo)	40,000
Estudos e Comunicação em Sexualidade e Reprodução Humana (ECOS) (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	450,000
Grupo de Apoio a Prevenção à AIDS-Bahia (over 2 years) (Salvador)	200,000
Grupo de Apoio a Prevenção à AIDS- Rio Gde do Sul (3 years) (Pôrto Alegre)	200,000
Grupo de Trabalho e Pesquisa em Orientação Sexual (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	400,000
Universidade Estadual de Campinas (NEPO) (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	286,000
Centro de Educação Sexual (over 2 years) (Rio de Janeiro)	150,000
Centro de Estudos e Pesquisa em Saúde Coletiva (Rio de Janeiro)	45,000
Centro de Pesquisas e Controle das Doenças Materno-Infantis (São Paulo)	31,000

Source: MacArthur Foundation Report on Activities 1994

**Table 8-5: MacArthur Foundation. Grants Awarded to Brazilian Organizations under their Population Program, 1996**

<b>Communications and Popular Education</b>	
Centro de referência integral para adolescentes (over 3 years) (Salvador)	110,000
Grupo de Apoio a Prevenção à AIDS-Bahia (over 3 years) (Salvador)	300,000
Grupo pela Vidda (over 2 years) (Rio de Janeiro)	70,000
Grupo Transas do Corpo, Ações Educativas em Saúde e Sexualidade (over 3 years) (Goiânia)	150,000
SOS adolescente (São Paulo)	60,000
Sempreviva Organização Feminista (over 2 years) (São Paulo)	85,000
<b>Women's Reproductive Health and Reproductive Rights</b>	
Associação Brasileira de Estudos Populacionais (ABEP) (over 3 years) (Belo Horizonte)	150,000
Centro de Pesquisas e Controle das Doenças materno-infantis de Campinas (São Paulo)	33,000
Cidadania, Estudo, Pesquisa, Informação e Ação (Cepia) (over 3 years) (Rio)	400,000
Coletivo Feminista Sexualidade e Saúde (over 3 years) (São Paulo)	225,000
National Feminist Network for Health and Reproductive Rights (São Paulo)	120,000
SOS Corpo Grupo de Saúde da Mulher (over 3 years) (Pernambuco)	230,000

Source: MacArthur Foundation Report on Activities 1996

**Table 8-6: SPT Projection of Budget for 1993 - 1996**

<b>Donor Agency</b>	<b>Year:</b>	<b>1993</b>	<b>1994-1996</b>
Christian Aid		30,000*	25,000
Memisa		18,160*	30,000
CZD		6,700	—
ICCO		167,500*	??
MacArthur		91,000	150,000
Pão para o Mundo		30,248*	—
Zending Werelddiakonaat		—	4,000
Self-generated funds		11,560	10,000

Sources: SPT 1993 Working Plan 1993; SPT 1994-1996 Working Plan

Note: \* Grant solicited

For the American donors I interviewed, the goal is to bridge the gap between the grassroots and the elite. Shawn saw donors' role as that of a "networker and convenor," that is, either to bring together a number of small organizations who could not otherwise afford such a gathering, or to bring together people with opposing positions in order to get them to come to some agreement. He says: "[Donors] can provide a neutral arena for conversations [...] through that process of coming together and talking, I think you can accomplish a great deal. It is very difficult to criticize a person face-to-face [...] the issue takes on a human dimension." Funding an organization even gives an added leverage for donors to complete this role because "if you fund an organization, they are going to... feel compelled because they are going to wonder "well, perhaps if I don't go, they're going to think negatively about us the next time we ask for a grant [...]" Shawn added that he does not like emphasizing these expectations with the groups he finances but they do exist.

Inevitably, this emphasis on advocacy work means increased interaction with public authorities. Donors want to finance organizations that are able to communicate people's needs to the elite. This was called "working upward" by another donor representative: Donna again:

[This institution] is looking for NGOs who can *work upward*, that is to say that establish links to policy-makers and to public opinion formers, and to public authorities at the national and international level... and ideally, you're trying to find NGOs who are also concerned with being responsive to grassroots constituencies....

Similarly, Marieke of Novib explained that: "In Brazil there is more and more emphasis put on political pressure... at the national level...advocacy. So we thought, that in the area of gender also it would be important for us to have a counterpart working from a gender perspective." This is why they decided to fund Cfemea for the lobbying and monitoring of the Federal Congress that they do. Contrary to Donna, Novib, or at least Marieke, does not think

that it is necessary for an advocacy NGO doing lobbying to have ties to communities: "This is how I think. To do a good lobbying job at the national level you don't need...contacts with the neighborhoods, with neighborhood people. It can be an advantage but it is not possible for each organization to work both at the level of the neighborhood, at the level of the local municipal government and at the national and international level. For many organizations it is too much." She believes that networks should fill in the gap and keep the advocacy groups on par with what is going on in the lives of neighborhood women.

Shawn, another program officer, emphasized the importance of "really creat[ing] a movement":

To create change at several different levels you really have to have seeds planted all over the country. You need to have them planted at the national level and at the community level. So we, again, have made a larger number of small grants. ... again I think the ultimate goal is to influence policy changes that serve, you know, women and men better and policy-makers need to turn and say "well there are the wishes of our constituents" and these grassroots organizations can demonstrate that it is indeed a concern [...]

Yet, he explains that those who managed to get beyond what he called a "let's stand up and denounce" position are those people who have the necessary cultural and political capital to interact with governing elites: "The people who were best able to articulate... and deliver those messages tended to be people comfortable... talking to government leaders, people who have had experience at that level or perhaps have resources to travel to the places where influential policy-makers meet." At the same time, he was fully aware of the difficulties of having people representing the grassroots when they have not been in touch with that reality for some time. He mentioned the resistance he encountered on the part of certain NGO leaders when he asked them to take him to the groups with whom they work. They wanted to meet him in his hotel. Nevertheless, these organizations receive continuing funding, in large part, I

believe, because they are the ones that have access to the government officials and can work with them because they have the necessary cultural capital: It was a great source of satisfaction for him to see "the involvement of the women of the reproductive health movement now in the government." He added:

it's a positive change. But it's happened at the government level, not from the foundation's side [...] These groups now have legitimacy and currency and obviously they are not only listened to but are sought out for their advice and their opinion. I mean, it's a significant change [...] and these people have our support and it's great to see the link, the bridge being constructed between the nongovernmental sector and the governmental sector. The government realized that these NGOs were a rich source of information.

And indeed the involvement of feminists in reproductive health policy-making in Brazil has truly been remarkable, as discussed in chapter 3. It is an accomplishment which cannot be minimized.

Program officers from other donors were quite blunt about the reasons why their institution favors organizations that work upward:

Donna : There is an imperative to make the money "*render*" (bear fruit) in a sense; in the sense of *visibility*, in the sense of impact. Impact understood in a particular way, impact understood as elite-based social change basically: influencing elites. It's not that you fund elites necessarily but you fund people who can get to elites, as well as people who can get to the grassroots...

Karen: [This institution] wants to be able to call on its grantees on occasions [...]

Donna: ... on *important interlocutors* on the national and international scale" (my emphasis).

NGO leader Edimeire's feelers about the importance of visibility for donor agencies (discussed in chapter 6) proved well-taken. According to Karen and Donna, working upward is basically a function of getting some visible payback on the money disbursed, something that can be shown to national congresses or constituencies in donor countries to garner support for their work.

Again, donors are not one monolithic block; there are agencies, such as the International Women's Health Coalition who seek out young, new groups, giving them small grants and "prepar[ing] smaller, newer groups to receive larger grants" (Karen's interview). Most European NGOs, including Novib who is beginning to reorient towards policy-making, focus more on local, grassroots organizations. This is true of Oxfam and Cebemo among the agencies I interviewed. But as we have seen, as they are increasingly put under scrutiny by their own constituencies they are likely to want to increase the visible return on their input as well.

The other side of the coin to a clear focus on consensual activities and visible impact has been a move away from protest and mobilization activities. Here is a concrete example of how mobilization activities are pushed aside by some donor agencies, related by a frustrated program officer:

Donna: It's very tricky, I mean, I had on-going conversations with *Mulheres Unidas* when I first came here and they sent me a number of small proposals for things like, you know, *a Campanha contra a Impunidade contra a violencia* (Campaign against domestic violence). And it just wasn't the kind of project... that would be funded here because it involved like... selling T-shirts and distributing posters and going to talk to people in the streets. It did not look like a thing that would get funded here, unless it had a media component. It had to be a lot more specific and I tried to explain it. And it was only for \$12,000. I said, you know... develop something more ambitious... send something that's \$40,000, \$50,000 and they did. But it was still the same kind of "essencialmente militância" (essentially activism)...

Nathalie: because that's who they are... [to which Donna fully agreed].

Certain types of campaigns, in particular informational campaigns, were funded while I was in Brazil. A good example is the campaign for the prevention of gynecological cancer financed by a small European organization (Memisa) and organized in collaboration by the *Movimento Mulher e Saúde* and SPT. This campaign was devised to raise awareness among neighborhood women of the need for public gynecological services offering free examinations, as well as for self-examination.

Donor agencies, despite their diversity, do tend to support an advocacy-centered and consensual position on the part of social movement organizations/NGOs, as well as to promote, at times unintentionally, the institutionalization of the movement, which has contributed to gender equity but needs to be backed up with a strong mass movement to ensure implementation of more than symbolic gains. Let's now consider how feminist activists of various strands perceive donors' interventions and how much they have managed to appropriate or resist them.

### How Women View and Resist International Agencies

All four groups I worked with, including the two volunteer groups, received some funding. The major difference is that volunteer groups do not receive enough money to pay their members a full-time, or even a part-time wage. When interviewed, feminist activists almost unanimously claimed that their organization was able to do whatever they wanted: only four NGO members and three volunteer group members thought that donors were constraining the work of *their own* group. For example, Ana Maria of F&S said to me:

We never had any demands on the part of agencies to do things that we did not want to do. It never happened and, also we do not accept proposals that request that we, for example, do things...like using a IUD on all women or tying the tubes of women or recommending women to have her tubes tied or...not counseling women regarding abortion. This never happened. Once only there was an agency which forbid F&S...to work with abortion, not only not performing abortions but also not counseling; then we did not accept the financing, OK.

Other such statements: "they never interfere in our broad working directives. We do what we want" (Rachel F&S) "There are no problems. When there is a problem we cut the relation...for example if they impose their view. Since I have been here it happened with Pathfinder. They wanted to fund us but it was very specific, with a problematic proposal and

we decided not to do what they wanted us to do. And it was a time when we needed money!"(Claudia SPT). Similarly, among volunteer organizations, I was told: "They don't influence us in any way" (MU) "I don't even see them" (Alessandra MU) "So far we have worked without problems" (Moema, The Casa).

Such statements of independence are the result of the much cherished autonomy of social movement organizations, which makes it difficult to acknowledge one's own dependency. I also believe that the influence of donor agencies is greatest at the time of selection of projects, although as we have just seen this is not the agencies' only point of leverage. Finally, the two volunteer groups had been receiving funding independently for only one year and hence had little experience with donors.

These statements of autonomy do not mean that activists are naive about agencies' political goals. Many activists, especially at SPT, expressed quite clearly that agencies "are not neutral," in statements such as "they want to reinforce those who share their political line." Nara said: "It starts with what they give priority to, so either you...fit in their priorities or they tell you no. Now once they have accepted to finance then the relation is rather open." After I asked her whether they had changed anything to their work in order to "fit in" the priorities of agencies, Nara answered with a nervous laughter "no, that's why we have so little money!" All but two F&S members emphasized the practical difficulties such as cultural miscommunication, time lost on report and proposal writing etc. (to be discussed further on), rather than focusing on the political dimension of the relationship.

Members of the *Casa da Mulher* were also aware of these priorities because the project they got funded originally included women and adolescent girls and the agency decided to finance only the adolescent part: "X support given topics" or "they did not finance the part



of this work that deals with women, only the work with teenagers." Beatriz (*Casa*) launched into a political economic analysis of NGOs and international relations. She suggested that I consider issues of institutionalization of the movement and their link to the new phase in which capitalism finds itself. To her, governments in the North are funding southern NGOs who are therefore coopted. She doubts that NGOs have any independence. On another occasion, Beatriz explained that, to her, NGOs are facilitating the State's implementation of structural adjustment policies by offering services which dampen social pressure. Such a position is quite common among movement activists.

It was among MU members that I found the strongest feelings against donor influence. Some members, such as Tatiana and Maura, basically see agencies as an imperialist conspiracy meant to undermine the women's movement. To them, donor funding is part of an effort to maintain the status quo.

Overall I would say that most activists see dealing with agencies as a necessary evil which they cannot avoid if they want to achieve their goals. As is to be expected, those women who actually deal with agency program officers and representatives have a more nuanced evaluation of agencies, usually more positive. This was very clear during the interview I had with Sande members.

The most outspoken critical position I heard about donor agencies' intervention in social movement activities was delivered, publicly, by Vanete Almeida, representative of the *Movimento de Mulheres Trabalhadoras Rurais do Nordeste* (Movement of Women Rural Workers of the Northeast) at the seminar on development cooperation and gender politics held in Recife in October, 1995. After thanking the organizers for inviting her organization to participate in this event, which she said was "*raro e importantíssimo*" (rare and very

important), Vanete, a vibrant Afro-Brazilian woman of modest origin with 30 years of activism, proceeded to express her frustration with donor's "*pensamento de colonizador*" (colonizer's mentality). She described her organization's difficulties to "on the one hand, meet our needs, the quasi impossibility to work without resources from outside. On the other, the search for our autonomy, our respect, our pride, our dignity." She politely but squarely declared "How wonderful if we could work without international cooperation!" This need for dignity and respect echoed in much stronger tones Ana Maria's (F&S) complaints about how emotionally draining it is to constantly have to prove one's self-worth in order to receive funding.

Vanete's evaluation of the situation is that agencies believe that "they, men and women, have the correct perspective on our problems, and we are the poor souls who don't know anything. This comes out very strongly and it is a colonizer's mentality!" This is particularly true when the agency has an office in the country, Vanete claimed. She gave concrete examples of agencies with whom they have been working telling them:

This is no longer our objective. Now it is that! For example: "Now it's no longer the rural world but the cities! or certain statements such as "this should not be" or "What you are trying to do is too soon" or "this organization is stuck in the local" or again "this organization is going to bureaucratize, it is not going to strengthen the base."

Movements know what they are doing even if it is not in the "*pauta da moda de vocês!*" (the latest fad on the agenda).

Vanete's very courageous objective with this short but effective speech was to air some of the criticisms which were voiced in muted tones in other places. Appropriating and carrying to its full logic the participatory discourse of "*parceria*" and "*dialogar*" (partnership and dialogue) of development agencies, she was careful to emphasize the need for talking this over

in order to improve the situation. Without such a participatory discourse it would probably have been impossible for her to feel safe enough to deliver such a blazing tirade.

I believe it is no coincidence that Vanete is not a member of a professionalized organization but of the Movement of Women Rural Workers in the Northeast. As she herself pointed out "popular movements do not elaborate as well as an NGO full of 'doctors'." Not only do popular movements have less to lose because they are not so dependent on the money granted, but I am convinced that their organizational culture is just that much more removed from international donors' when compared with the organizational culture of Southern Brazil's urban educated women's groups. Popular movement members' cultural capital puts them at a disadvantage when attempting to find out what donors' underlying motives are and to "write sentences that please the donors" to quote Vanete again.

### NGOs' Resistance

Despite their caution at voicing criticisms, women's NGOs have not been passive in this relationship. Women's NGOs have resisted certain donor trends, collectively and alongside other NGOs. For example, Brazilian NGOs have consistently argued with European donors since they started emphasizing indicators measuring the "impact" of their work. A series of roundtables and seminars have been organized to at least discuss what criteria could be used to "measure" this impact.

Women's health NGOs for their part have had to contend with donors' wishes to include men in research and pilot projects on reproductive health done by women's NGOs. This recent trend derives from following the call for a true "gender" perspective. It is understandable considering the role of men in most women's reproductive and sexual

lives. However, women's groups have been resisting in an effort to protect arduously-won women's spaces. It is of course an unequal battle however, despite the rhetoric of "participatory development," since donors hold the purse's strings and NGOs are in the position of recipients. As Edimeire, one of the activists I worked with told me "you'll see, pretty soon everybody will be working with men!"

Besides collective resistance, NGOs also make use of the full-range of the "weapons of the weak" to use Scott's phrase (1985) referring to small-scale, non public, acts of resistance. As Vanete herself recognized, and as donors' program officers know very well, NGOs -- especially 5-star NGOs-- have the know-how and formal education to "write sentences that please the donors." In other words, they do what we academics do when we write research proposals, that is, to tailor it to the preferences of the particular financing agency we send it to. However, again, this is not as easy to do for neighborhood women's groups who do not have the necessary cultural capital, nor the insider knowledge of donor agencies that long-time NGOs have. One NGO member told me "we change the way we write reports so that they have what they want to hear," while another argued that they find a way to make a better fit when writing their proposals. For example, if they send a proposal to UNFPA or Unicef, they emphasize the institutional part of their work. Another NGO member however, denied having to do this. I had referred to the grant I had gotten from MacArthur to conduct my research and told her about how I emphasized this or that aspect of my project in order to fit better with what the donor funds. I asked her whether they had to do these things and she said

NGO member: According to my personal experience no.. we do not do this.

N: (surprised) you don't do this?

NGO member: At the maximum we moderate our language a bit when it is a Christian agency, do you understand? or...things like that.

She might simply have been leery to expose her organization to the reprisals of donors.

The issue of language she mentioned has to do with abortion. Indeed, proposals sent to religious agencies do not mention the abortion orientation and lobbying done by this organization.

Another example of resistance through false compliance includes a situation where a group did not purchase a piece of equipment for which they had received money as part of a particular project. Instead they used the money for their headquarters' rent and electricity bill. According to the same project, a large part of the money received was supposed to compensate the workshop leaders, i.e. the groups' members. Again the group used the money to pay for headquarters' overhead costs. One of the NGOs also resisted including men in their workshops despite insistence by a US donor. Since they did not think it was such a good idea, the Brazilian NGO members instead offered participating women the choice of bringing their partners if they wanted to. None did.

### Noticeable Problems

When asked whether there were any problems with financing agencies, NGO and voluntary group members alike first responded an emphatic no. It is of course understandable that women are particularly cautious about voicing any critique at the hand that feeds them. Yet, further probing and participant observation revealed a range of problems that did crop up.

Language barriers and cross-cultural communication glitches were cause for frustration on the part of women's groups. In one case, a program officer was deemed cold (*frio, distante*)

and having little sympathy for their difficulties. Another group, after a visit at the beginning of the year, noted that this officer "did not speak Portuguese very well." The women felt that "he had not understood them and that they had not understood him either, that altogether communication had been very bad." Language problems are in most cases limited by the fact that program officers usually can speak Portuguese. I found out later when interviewing the particular officer that he had been switched from English-speaking countries to Latin America and had had to learn both Spanish and Portuguese simultaneously, which he was very eager to do. Indeed, relations improved as time went by and the officer's command of the language improved. Nevertheless, I suspect that there might have been more than just language, but also a culture clash which made the officer seem cold and aloof.

There was also frustration over having to translate all correspondence and reports coming from or going to that agency. The officer explained that the agency, for cost-cutting reasons, preferred giving money to the groups for translation of documents rather than hiring translators or paying for outside translation services. I ended up offering my services to the groups for translating their reports, which eased my guilt feelings for taking up so much of their time with my questions.

The most acute cultural communication problem occurred when a North-American feminist donor NGO attempted to work in conjunction with a Brazilian feminist group on the pilot research project mentioned in chapter 6. The Brazilians argued that the Americans had little understanding of Brazilian reality and erroneously assumed that approaching the problem US style would also work in Brazil. More specifically, the US women assumed a level of communication and understanding among Brazilian heterosexual couples similar to that of the US context. This skewed their vision of the maneuvering and negotiating space of Brazilian

women in reproductive health decisions. The Brazilian women said to me "it was a bit as if they spoke a different language and did not understand what the other was saying."

Another major type of complaint concerned the bureaucratic problems the groups were encountering in their relationships with donors. There were paperwork problems and money problems. Paperwork problems occurred when an agency was "*bagunçada*" (disorganized) and lost documents NGOs had already sent. A popular feminist group acknowledged that in a way it made them feel better because they had been intimidated by the formality that agencies required. However, such bureaucratic mishaps can have dire consequences for women's groups. For example, the *Casa da Mulher*'s financial report was rejected twice, although done by the same accountant who worked on other NGOs reports. This meant that the *Casa* did not receive the next installment of their grant on time and had no money to pay for their rent or electricity. They resorted to their social network to bridge the gap. Simply delayed grant money was also a fairly common source of problems for other NGOs, especially in recent years when they have so little financial margin.

The problems encountered by women's groups in their working partnerships with international donor agencies are in fact relatively minor when compared to the "*burocracia violenta*" (violent bureaucratic mire) they have to face when working with the Brazilian Ministry of Health. With constantly changing accounting requirements, but consistently belated money payments, working with the Brazilian Ministry of Health has proven quite a challenge. I was present at the first visit that men from the Ministry made to the *Casa da Mulher*. One of them was particularly disrespectful and condescending towards Moema, explaining things to her as if she were a child. They had stood her up once already and now insisted that she

accompany them to the accountant's office. Not impressed with their bullying, Moema politely but firmly refused to go along.

Some international donors leave little leeway for their southern counterparts to design their project. They impose form or content, or both, as I have discussed in chapter 6. The project ends up being inappropriate for Brazilian reality, in part because the "consultants" believe they know what needs to be done. In one of the best examples of "facipulation," i.e. the rhetorical rather than genuine use of participatory methodologies in development.... which my informant, more colorfully called "*masturbação intelectual*," ... the donor's "consultants," through several drafts of the project, imposed their vision and their methodology on the Brazilian NGO members. Given the power differential between donor and recipient, the Brazilians' resistance was only met by rejection of their proposal and a forced return to the drawing board.

Despite these concrete examples, few women complained about the relationship of hierarchy that exists between those who give the money and those who receive it. Since "to expose yourself, to say what you think, means running the risk of no longer receiving funding" to quote Vanete Almeida again. Yet, there is an undeniable structurally given hierarchy between these two actors, one in the North, the other in the South, one depending on the other for resources, and when dealing with popular/neighborhood groups there is an added class dimension to the divide.

### Conclusion

The change of recent years on the donors' scene has been well summed up by Ana Maria Doimo. She says: "The [NGOs] who have made it so far know that the benevolence of



European agencies linked to churches for mobilization and popular organizing is declining, while the interest of secular agencies in interventions measured in terms of efficiency and rationality, based on a cost/benefit calculations, is rising." As European and Canadian donors follow the American model, there will be less maneuvering space for NGOs in terms of picking and choosing from whom to get funding. The harsh shrinking of resources is also enforcing an understandable "get what you can" attitude.

The need for visible impact built into this model is pulling these donors towards the financing of consensual activities in the institutional realm, as well as of experienced and well-known organizations. So is, we should not forget, the new reality of a consolidated formal democracy, with greater possibilities of communication and interaction with the governing elite.

Unintentionally, donors are promoting the formalization and hierarchization of organizations due to their independent status requirement and emphasis on planning, and encouraging professionalization and specialization within organizations due to their financial and narrative reporting requirements. We have seen that professionalization and formalization prompt organizations towards working in the institutional arena of politics. Consequently, I believe that donor financing has played its part in the current institutionalization of the Brazilian women's movement and move away from consciousness-raising and organizing activities. Edwards and Hulme have noted a similar trend in the case of development NGOs in general.

When dependent on official funding, they tend:

to perform poorly in the crucial task of local institutional development [...], the gradual strengthening of capacities and capabilities among GROs [grassroots organizations] to enable them to play a more effective and independent role in development. This is because many official agencies are unwilling to support the long time horizons, careful

nurturing and gradual qualitative results that characterize successful institutional development. [...] Such work is difficult to 'sell' to politicians. (1996:7)

An element which I have not mentioned explicitly so far is the role large philanthropic foundations have played in efforts to stabilize social systems. After all, research on the social origins and networks of large US foundations has shown that "they are closely related to the "higher circles" in the economic, social and political elite" (Colwell 1980: 428). "Links through family ties, educational institutions, social clubs, membership on corporate boards of directors" are some of the ways foundation trustees are linked to the economic, social and political elite in this country (ibid.: 427). This is likely to contribute to the importance they place on bringing different social actors together to discuss an issue, or on patching up glaring social inequalities that are likely to lead to great disruption of social peace. In the 1950s for example the Ford Foundation financed a large part of the restructuring of political science into a behavioral science meant to "develop an understanding of social disorganization" in the face of rapid social change (Seybold 1980:275). They feared that "in such a period of change, dislocations and breakdowns occur, with resulting political, economic and social unrest" (from Ford document of the time (ibid:275)).

On the other hand, Ford also financed the US black civil rights movement and was criticized by the US Congress for such activities. In other words, on a given issue, foundations can be taken advantage of by supporters of radical democracy such as social movement organizations, provided the latter are aware of the unintended consequences of such funding. Moreover, my encounters with program officers working on the ground led me to believe that foundations should not be viewed as monoliths since these officers do not necessarily share the lines and objectives of their Board of Trustees. In other words, I mostly agree with Jenkins and

Eckert (1986)<sup>9</sup> that donors' influence should be considered more in terms of channeling of the movement than its simplistic cooptation and control, and that we need to dissociate "control as the intention of patrons vs. control as the consequences of patronage" (1986:813). However, unlike in their study of the financing of the Black movement in the 1960s in the US, I hope to have shown that financing agencies did also stimulate, intentionally, the reorientation of women's NGOs goals and tactics towards the policy arena.

I want to finish this chapter on a self-reflective note for us academics, who benefit from the same funding sources as NGOs. I, for example, received a grant from the MacArthur Peace and International Cooperation Program to do my research. Hence, we are facing some of the very same dilemmas when accepting money from these institutions. I was fortunate that MacArthur had an interest in my topic and that my advisors and I had the necessary knowledge and formal education to frame a proposal consistent with the interests of the foundation. It also turned out, after the grant was awarded, that the "city" feminist groups I worked with were all funded by the foundation, which did make me uneasy at first. Overall, this raises important questions as to just how much foundations direct the production and the policy-oriented use of knowledge both in its theoretical and practical dimensions.

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<sup>9</sup> See discussion in Chapter 2.

## CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION

### Relationship NGOs/ Social Movement

This study shows that there is much ambiguity and hybridity in the world of feminist activists, professionalized and volunteer, that each contribute to the movement in their own way and that there are no easy answers to the challenges posed by professionalization. These challenges do need to be addressed if the women's movement wants to contribute to the further deepening of democracy in Brazil.

This study demonstrates that feminist NGOs, because of the origin of their members in the movement and their sense of collective identity as women, should be considered as part of the feminist and hence of the larger women's movement. This is different from most development-focused NGOs but similar to NGOs born out of other identity-based movements such as the Afro-Brazilian movement. As a result, feminist NGOs have a hybrid identity.

With regard to theorizing the professionalization of social movements, this case study argues against McCarthy and Zald's (1987) contention that members of professionalized movement organizations are individuals with a social reform agenda but with no connection to the movement. On the contrary, it supports Pam Oliver's (1983) contention that the leaders of professionalized organizations stem from the movement and that they are no less committed to it. However, the presence of extrinsic rewards and

motivators does alter the meaning of members' participation in NGOs in the sense that it has become a "labor of love and bread." It remains to be seen whether, past this initial phase of professionalization, more NGO members will stem from the expanding pool of gendered social reform-minded university graduates, since classical volunteer movement organizations are becoming more rare in São Paulo.

What led to the professionalization of the feminist movement and the creation or transformation of feminist groups into feminist NGOs? There is no doubt that the availability of funding, as MacCarthy and Zald noted for US progressive movements in the 60s, made the move towards professionalized activism possible. In fact, without this funding, NGOs would not exist. Furthermore, donors' models of planning, requirements for grant and project accounting, and more recently their preferred political strategy, as well as the need on the part of NGOs to secure further funding also greatly contributed to the transformation of women's groups into professionalized women's NGOs. Professionalized activism was also, as Melucci argues (1984), a result of the success of the movement: the absorption, though limited, by the international establishment and by states of some of the tenets of feminism (often as it fits their purpose) generated the very availability of funding for women's groups and gender issues.

A third element which contributed greatly, although indirectly, to the professionalization of the feminist movement in Brazil is the new structure of political opportunities that came in the form of the democratization of the regime. Indeed, as new channels of expression opened, some activists started considering the policy arena as a viable option for successful social change, especially those who have had experience with state women's machineries. They then needed to adapt their organizational forms, tactics

and skills to this new realm of activities, by maintaining regular office hours and permanent contact, by offering a specialized staff up-to-date on the vast literature now available on gender issues, as well as by presenting a dependable, respectable and professional outlook that would bring policy-makers to take them seriously.

### Impact of Practices on Collective Identity

However, as I hope to have shown, practices are not always simply a reflection of groups' ideas, they can also modify goals and preferred tactics. I hope to have shown, as Staggenborg had done in the case of the US pro-choice movement, that organizational features of professionalized activist organizations, linked to the "logic of projects" inherent to donor funding as it is disbursed today, reinforce NGO preference for institutionalized arenas, if not steer feminist NGOs away from movement organizing and micro-level consciousness-raising.

Indeed a number of aspects of organizational forms linked to professionalization tend to inhibit volunteer mobilization. The centrality of the planning imperative in project work presses NGOs to keep on track and to be undisturbed by potentially "hot" mobilizing issues and by unexpected outside incursions in their work. The physical absence of leaders from the local level, schedule conflicts with grassroots activities, the limited growth of their own organization due to professional and budgetary constraints, the more punctual and top-down content/form of research or pilot projects, as opposed to *assessoria*, and finally the time constraints which lead them to do away with "us-building" activities all potentially negatively impact volunteer mobilization. This case study thus would seem to argue in favor of the "inhibition" model elaborated by Kleidman (1994). However, like

Kleidman, I believe that this is not an unavoidable outcome but rather the result of the combination of this very clear influence of a professionalized organizational form with the particular set of political and economic conditions which push Brazilian feminist NGOs at this time, towards the policy arena. I shall return to how I think feminist NGOs might approach this challenge.

The case of SPT demonstrates both the very strong push that the "logic of projects" practices impose away from mobilization and simultaneously how professionalization is not always systematically linked to institutionalization: SPT has been going on for 20 years as a professionalized organization yet they have kept a very strong attachment to mobilizing politics, which is undoubtedly related to the social origin of its members, their political ideology and affiliation to the left of the PT. Recently, however, they have been refocusing their work away from São Paulo's neighborhoods towards more visible forms of mobilization such as in the *Central dos Movimentos Populares* or women's sections of trade-unions. They also wish to play a more active role in the policy arena.

#### Keeping the Balance between Policy Formulation and Mobilizing /Cultural Change

Development NGOs have been criticized for being "apolitical" when they limit themselves to the local scale of action and "exploit the poor" because they make a living at providing them with service delivery (Petras 1997). It is indeed important for NGOs to go beyond their "parochial turf" and to scale up. Besides stirring public debate to challenge cultural norms, working in networks and cautiously in the political arena to reform the State is crucial to this task. Brazilian professionalized feminists have been successfully

active in these formal political arenas: their involvement with the UN conference processes in Cairo (1994) and in Beijing (1995), and more recently with abortion regulation legislation at home are a good examples of their successes. We have discussed that a two-pronged strategy involving a strong movement outside the state while some work from within seems to be the most appropriate to ensure effective social change. Naila Kabeer reminds us that "the multidimensional nature of power suggests that empowerment strategies for women must build on 'the power within' as a necessary adjunct to improving their ability to control resources, to determine agendas and make decisions" (1994: 229). This can only be achieved through a ground-up approach, which means that lobbying is not sufficient as a strategy for genuine gender equity (ibid: 230).

As they are actively involved in the policy arena, often called upon by national and international authorities, feminist NGO activists should be aware of the potentially detrimental impact of the organizational forms linked to professionalized activism on mobilizing reviewed earlier, as well as of a number of other processes, of which some activists are keenly aware.

First, in this era of rolling back of the state, implementing legislative gains for women, often entailing intervention by the welfare providing arm of the state, is likely to prove difficult without much pressure from below. As Moema from the Casa said:

We know, and they know too, our comrades also know, that it is not enough for the health issue to be in the legislation, because we already have a lot of examples of this, a lot of things which are in the Constitution and which are not respected. And if we, as feminist movement, do not pressure, if we do not join forces with others like the public health professionals, the struggle of the public health movement and with other movements who struggle for better health, like the movement for water and health, we will not manage to change the situation. *"E a gente sabe, como elas também sabem, nossas companheiras também sabem, que não basta a coisa, a questão da saúde estar na legislação, porque nós já*



*temos muitos exemplos disso, muitas coisas que estão na constituição que não é respeitada. E que se a gente enquanto movimento feminista não fizer pressão, não nos unirmos com pessoal, com sanitaristas a luta do movimento sanitarista e outros movimentos que lutam por saúde, como movimento por água e saúde, nós não vamos conseguir reverter essa situação."*

Second, professionalized policy-centered feminists tend to have more formal education, greater cultural capital, to be very articulate, have a greater power of convincing others which gives them greater power in coalition work so that their agenda often prevails. They also have more time and more resources to dedicate to such activities. Claudia of SPT suggested that movement-oriented groups should meet and network (*articular*) more often in order to create a counter-balance. Indeed, the greater power of professionalized, policy-centered activists appeared clearly in a meeting of the São Paulo regional *Rede* as they were supposed to discuss how to prevent the conservative mayor's privatization plan for the municipal health system (PAS). This meant a lot to movement-oriented, local popular feminist groups. It was a pressing issue too as the bill was soon to be voted on at the municipal legislature. It turned out that an issue concerning the participation of a member of the *Rede* in the National Health Council (*Conselho Nacional de Saúde*) in Brasília just had come up. This topic consumed most of the time of the meeting, leaving only its tail-end to discuss the PAS.

Third, it is essential for a genuinely democratic change, to ensure the participation of poor women "beyond the project level, to intervening in the broader policymaking agenda [so] that their strategic interests can become an enduring influence on the course of development" as Kabeer notes (1994:262). Hence the role of feminist NGOs is essential in strengthening the voices of poor women, Afro-brazilian women and other underprivileged groups so that they have access to the policy arena themselves. Until that

time, white middle class feminists must be particularly vigilant when they are called upon to represent "women" to incorporate as best they can the point of view of others. The efforts of the *Rede* to include neighborhood groups are commendable and this forum should be consolidated to ensure that all the voices in the women's health movement are heard by those who get to represent it. This will strengthen its role as democratizing agent.

### Getting the Best of Both Worlds

Many professionalized activists, as I hope to have shown throughout this work, are aware of and concerned about the challenges of the work they do. So are a number of donor representatives. I did not come up with any of this on my own, it was pieced together from what I learned here and in the literature on NGOs and on social movements. In this section I see my role as disseminating what I have learned and pointing at some possible solutions, although it is not always possible to find a solution to some of the more paradoxical difficulties at hand.

As far as professionalized activists are concerned, it is necessary to be aware of the push towards formalization and hierarchization of the movement, and away from organizing/consciousness-raising and group-capacity building, that funding entails. This is also particularly called for in the case of groups such as The Casa, still a volunteer and popular feminist organization, who are starting to receive funding and want to maintain their movement-oriented strategy. Some might argue it would be better for such groups to remain totally independent from donor funding to ensure their autonomy. Indeed, this is an important consideration. The fact is though that even organizing activities are expensive in

a place such as São Paulo: renting a space large enough to gather a group of people is essential, owning a fax, even a telephone, which is still very expensive in Brazil, is becoming increasingly important if the group is to be able to network with others. This means that small grants, which do not provide for a permanent paid staff but for overhead costs, are very helpful for continued mobilization and work at the grassroots. We enter fullfledged paradox though if we want to limit these activists to volunteer activism since, once some activists are paid for their activities, many volunteer activists resent the fact that they have to do it for free and to struggle between their regular job and their movement work. Is it then fair to deny them the chance and the right to dedicate themselves fully to activism if they want to?

Professionalized activists also need to face head-on the issue of the power differential which exists between them and volunteer activists as a result of their access to resources, information, contacts, networking time and of their privileged status vis-a-vis public authorities. Coming up with clear criteria for representation, clear mechanisms for the transmission of knowledge and of contacts will greatly help. This of course, is not easy to do, especially when the authorities have their own idea of who should be representing the movement and who they need to be calling upon. Ensuring a constant, open, dialogue between the various wings of the women's movement field is essential, in such movement-wide fora such as the *Rede*. This is also needed for policy-centered feminists to resource themselves and to limit the dangers of discursive appropriation, of becoming part of a "*feminismo aplanaltado*" to use Mary Garcia Castro's (1998:11) phrase again. Reintroducing the "us-building" mechanisms and participation-fostering techniques, that feminists have perfected in their 20 years of experience with workshops will be particularly

useful to ensure that everybody's voices will be heard now that such fora have been successful at bringing in a plurality of alternative feminisms. At the level of São Paulo, it is essential to maintain fora for discussion such as the weekly *Café Feminista*, or the *Fórum de Mulheres de São Paulo* which met regularly to prepare for the Beijing conference, or in the case of the women's health movement the forum organized around the feminist magazine *Enfoque Feminista*.

As Edwards and Hulme point out (1996), multiple accountability to their different constituencies will be crucial for the positive future of NGOs. Feminist NGOs, the ultimate hybrid NGOs, a nonmembership organization based on a gendered collective identity, would greatly strengthen their position by introducing mechanisms of "downward" accountability to their "beneficiaries." SPT's efforts to bolster their Board of Directors' social control function is most welcome and should be further pursued. Their Board of Trustees includes some women "beneficiaries." Similarly, F&S's "users' assembly" (*assembléia de usuárias*) if turned into a regularly scheduled, open, once-a-month meeting, with promotion activities for the clinic and other activities would also greatly help keeping the bond alive with their "constituency" and hence ensure a more bottom-up interpretation of women's needs. This might at first strain the already limited resources of NGOs who are struggling with current reduced funding possibilities but should also open new doors for action. Indeed, these measures to increase "downward" accountability could be coupled with other measures which could potentially help NGOs achieve a balance between their strengthening of the movement/cultural project of transformation and their work in the policy arena. I believe it is important for individual organizations to achieve such a balance because this practice will influence their

intervention in the policy arena, and mostly because, contrary to what some might think, movement-wide fora, at this point, do not provide for this balance as a result of the power differentials and the difficulties I noted in terms of the quality of participation in these fora by the more movement-oriented groups. I trust that soon, fora such as the *Rede* will provide such "networks and alliances that work synergistically to achieve broad but common goals" (Hulme and Edwards 1997: 282).

One first suggestion to help NGOs reach a balance between movement strengthening and policy formulation is to start working with volunteers. Despite the tensions present in such a set-up, this is one of the only ways to get around NGOs' budgetary and professional limitations on the growth of their own membership base and therefore on that of the movement activist pool.

Second, it is important for feminist NGOs to ensure some measure of bottom-up definition of the projects they choose to work with by the neighborhood women involved. I have explained that the top-down characteristics of some research and pilot projects preclude neighborhood women's genuine input on the content or the form of the intervention. This is not conducive to their further participation in such projects. Ideally, a pattern of sustained, long-term *assessoria*, as opposed to sporadic contacts, with given neighborhood communities and women's groups is most likely to produce the type of group-capacity building which will lead to stronger women's leadership in the neighborhoods and put their items on the national agenda. Since nothing is simple, this also means being aware of avoiding dependency.

As far as donors are concerned, Edwards and Hulme (1996) and Hulme and Edwards (1997) among others have come up with recommendations for more adequate

policies for donor funding if they want to have a progressive impact. One recurring theme, which I can only reiterate here, is that NGOs need longer term, more stable, more predictable funding: institutional funding is more appropriate than project-based financing since it liberates NGOs from an unceasing, grinding searching, reporting and accounting work. Less project-based financing would also allow NGOs to remain more open to the demands generated by neighborhood women's groups.

Edwards and Hulme suggest that to ensure accountability and the proper use of funds, funding be channelled "through networks that ensure quality control through self-regulation and peer pressure" (1996:255). This is a suggestion worthy of further exploration. Brazilian NGOs have been good at establishing serious networks/ alliances such as ABONG, or the Rede which could be use in such a scheme.

I believe that it is also essential for nongovernmental donors who really want to make a progressive impact to consider not only how their operational constraints and practices affect social movements towards formalization, hierarchization and institutionalization and hence reconsider some of these practices, but also that a strong mass-based movement is needed to get legislative and other gains implemented, if they are not to remain symbolic gains.

In order not to stifle the "power in movement" to use Tarrow's phrase (1994) donors should consider longer lasting relations with their beneficiaries, not based "on a specification of outputs and targets, [but rather] on continual dialogues about objectives and strategies" (Carroll 1992: 164). Some donors, such as ICCO, have started to do this with SPT, and other NGOs. The relationship should be based, as it was during the dictatorship, on trust. Donors should also earmark a percentage of their financing of

professionalized, larger NGOs for "open" activities to be used to respond to movement demands. They should also earmark some of their budget for a large number of small grants for innovative volunteer, movement-oriented, groups. Such grants, as I have explained earlier should pay for overhead costs rather than for personnel remuneration.

A final point is that if donors do want to privilege the institutional route and develop strong professionalized groups, they need to think about providing or helping NGO personnel secure social benefits such as retirement benefits and *carteira assinada*. This may be achieved through financing ABONG's negotiation with the government to provide the status of entities of public utility<sup>1</sup> to more NGOs. This move would of course further entrench the professional character of NGOs and attract people who might not have otherwise entered the movement. In that sense, we are facing yet another dilemma.

I want to conclude by returning to the issue of the contribution of NGOs to the deepening of democracy in Brazil. The VII Feminist Encontro of Latin America and the Caribbean in November 1996 in Cartagena (Chile) was home to a raging debate on the role of "institutionalized" feminism and NGOs which aired many of the same questions I raised in this study (see Alvarez 1998b; Garcia Castro 1998). Such a debate, if painful, is also salutary because it calls attention to the dangers of being "too close for comfort" (Hulme and Edwards 1997) with the powers-that-be. Indeed, NGOs and their current tendency to focus toward institutional arenas are more ambiguous agents of democratization than are volunteer movement organizations. On the one hand, their support for mobilization and consciousness-raising are currently limited and their

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<sup>1</sup> This status exonerates nonprofit organizations from paying employees' dues towards social security. See chapter 5.

interaction with and support of neighborhood movements have been reduced. On the other hand, NGOs' legislative gains and networking abilities contribute to a more egalitarian Brazil. NGOs have made it possible for feminist activists to become familiar with the internal functioning of institutional arenas and to learn to make their voices heard within such contexts. Yet, at a time when the consolidation of formal democracies in most of Latin America has done away with much of the state of flux, and hence of possibilities for radical change, of the earlier phase of transition to civilian rule, women's movements in the region cannot afford to let go of their project of cultural transformation and must continue the pressure from below which requires continuous mobilization. Moreover, NGOs, including feminist NGOs, which are mostly a middle class phenomenon and whose needs and concerns are different from those of the popular classes cannot stray too far from supporting the grassroots to put their concerns and issues on the agenda, especially in these times of neoliberal cutbacks on public services.



## APPENDIX A ORIGINAL QUOTES IN PORTUGUESE

### Chapter 3: Nongovernmental Organizations and The Women's Movement

"I believe that NGOs are the face of social movements in the 90s. I think that the distinction made between movement and NGO is often artificial. [...] Women's NGOs for example: today, I think that they are not really support organizations for the women's movement. They are the women's movement. The women's movement today is made up of women's NGOs and a few associations."

*"Eu acho que as ONGs são a face dos anos 90, eu acho, dos movimentos sociais. Eu acho que a separação entre movimento e ONG, ela é muitas vezes artificial." "As ONGs de mulheres hoje por exemplo, eu acho que elas não são exatamente ONGs de assessoria ao movimento de mulheres, elas são o movimento de mulheres. O movimento de mulheres hoje é constituído por ONGs de mulheres e algumas associações."*

"What is the basic difference between an NGO in Brazil and a social movement organization? It is that, in the end, in the very end, an NGO is a micro or a medium-sized firm. [...] You [professional feminists] have a place in our hearts, you are legitimate members of this movement... but you're not the boss."

*"Qual é a diferença básica entre uma Ong no Brasil e uma entidade do Movimento Social? É que no fundo, no fundo, uma Ong é uma micro ou uma média empresa."... "Vocês [profissionais do feminismo] cabem no nosso coração, vocês são legitimamente desse Movimento... mas não são donas."*

"Related to the transmission of some sort of competence and knowledge which involves mutual trust and some degree of affinity of goals" *"Associado à transmissão de alguma competência de conhecimento, que envolve confiança mútua e uma certa afinidade de propósitos."*

"I already had marxism. But the method, the focus on process and on the popular sectors as subjects of their history, this I learned with them (the Jesuits of CEAS in Pernambuco). The refined translation of marxism to its practice, of how to translate it into a method... In terms of intervention I learnt a lot."

*"Eu tinha o marxismo. Mas aprendi com eles (os jesuítas do CEAS, em Pernambuco), o método-processo. É um enfoque privilegiado nos setores populares como sujeito. A fineza na tradução do marxismo para a prática, de como traduzir isso em método... No plano da intervenção aprendi muita coisa"* (quoted in Landim 1993:262).

"There is a modernizing project, in the sense that they take to popular groups the underlying assumptions of universalist rationalism, the logic of equality, autonomy, individualism, participation, dialogue -- of citizenship."

*"Está presente um projeto modernizador, em que se levam aos grupos populares os pressupostos de um racionalismo universalista, a lógica da igualdade, da autonomia, do individualismo, da participação, e diálogo - da cidadania."* (Landim 1993:219).

"An nonprofit entity whose fundamental objective is to develop a democratic society, that is, a society based on democratic values: freedom, equality, diversity, participation and solidarity"

*"Uma entidade sem fins de lucro cujo objetivo fundamental é desenvolver uma sociedade democrática, isto é, uma sociedade fundada nos valores da democracia - liberdade, igualdade, diversidade, participação e solidariedade"* (da Souza 1995: 3).

"The women's question - a macroproblem to be resolved- will not find a solution in a fragmented manner, which is one of the characteristics of academic disciplines and governmental policies. It cannot be dealt with as a mere technical problem or by specializing in this or that issue"

*"A questão da mulher - um macroproblema a ser resolvido - não poderá ser encaminhada de forma fragmentada, uma característica das disciplinas acadêmicas e das políticas governamentais. Não se pode tratá-la como um mero problema técnico-profissional ou apenas se especializando em alguns temas."* (Teles 1993:129).

"We made this political evaluation since the beginning and we decided that our organizations should not become classic NGOs, [...] I mean, we can obtain funding, as a social movement organization, from whomever we want, but we do not live from this money, we do not need this financing to exist."

*"Essa avaliação política nós fizemos desde o começo e fizemos a avaliação de que nossas entidades não deveriam se transformar em Ongs clássicas, [...] quer dizer, podemos fazer financiamento como entidade de movimento social, com quem a gente quiser, mas nós não vivemos disso, nós não precisamos do financiamento pra existir."*

"The groups to which I belong are not NGOs according to a political definition. They are social movement organizations. [...] Either in the black movement or in the feminist movement, I belong to both, they are social movement organizations, with a body of affiliates, who decides who is going to lead, who is not going to lead, who decides as well whether we need to look for funding or not, what are our principles in this story. I mean, it is not the Board of Directors who decide these things, it is the General Assembly of our organization. I mean, everybody rules, isn't it?... What's the basic difference between an NGO, in Brazil, and a social movement organization? It is that, in the end, in the very end, an NGO is a micro or a medium-sized firm. It has a boss."

*"Os grupos aos quais pertenço, não são Ongs por definição política, são entidades do Movimento Social. [...] Tanto do Movimento Negro, tanto do Movimento Feminista, que eu pertenço, elas são entidades do Movimento Social, com corpo de associadas, que definem quem vai dirigir, quem não vai dirigir, que definem, inclusive, se a gente tiver que fazer financiamento ou não, quais os princípios de tudo isso. Quer dizer, quem define isso não é a*

*Diretoria da entidade, quem define isso é uma Assembléia Geral da entidade. Quer dizer, manda todo mundo, não é .. qual é a diferença básica entre uma Ong do Brasil e uma entidade do Movimento Social? É que no fundo, no fundo, uma Ong é uma micro ou uma média empresa, tem dono."*

"So, there are not NGOs, they are social movement organizations which work essentially with discourses, with consciousness-raising, they do not have any type of service delivery except for issues of discourse, right? Solidarity is our political option."

*"Então, não são Ongs, são entidades do movimento social, que trabalha essencialmente com o discurso, com a elevação da consciência, não temos nenhuma prestação de serviços a não ser o discurso, né; a solidariedade é uma opção política nossa."*

"It was us, women, who raised the question of new values, of sexuality, first as an organized movement, then as women's NGOs"

*"Quem colocou a questão dos novos valores, da sexualidade, fomos nós, mulheres, primeiro enquanto movimento organizado, depois como ONGs de mulheres" (RNFSDR 1994:14).*

"NGOs are strongly hybrid. I don't know if it is only here in Brazil, but they have a serious identity problem. They have to assume that they are professionals of feminism or of the Black movement. Right?"

*"As Ongs têm um hibridismo muito grande, eu não sei se é só no Brasil, mas elas têm um problema de identidade séria. Elas têm que assumir que elas são profissionais do feminismo ou do Movimento Negro, entendeu?"*

"We involved women's groups with a clear feminist orientation or not, feminist NGOs, NGOs who work principally with women, or not, women's groups active in trade-unions, professional or neighborhood associations, political parties, churches, academic centers, besides other organizations of civil society"

*"Envolvemos grupos de mulheres com marcada orientação feminista ou não, ONGs feministas, ONGs que têm as mulheres como grupo central de seus trabalhos ou não, grupos de mulheres atuantes em sindicatos, associações profissionais e de bairros, partidos políticos, igrejas, centros acadêmicos, além de outras organizações da sociedade civil." (Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras 1995:2).*

"Yes, our journey to China, with all its activities, is an irrefutable proof of one and a half year of work by women - stealing hours here and there"

*"Sim, nossa caminhada até a China, com todas essas ações, é prova irrefutável de um ano e meio de trabalho realizado por mulheres - em horas roubadas aqui e ali" (ibid:3).*

"They have to assume that they are professionals of feminism or of the black movement, right? Why should the feminist profession remain clandestine? It's great! It should not remain in clandestinity. A feminist professional, what's shameful about this? I think we need a lot of professionals, as they are called, but these women should not be ashamed of it!"

*"Elas têm que assumir que elas são profissionais do feminismo ou do Movimento Negro, entendeu? Porque que a profissão feminista tem que ficar na clandestinidade? Tá ótimo, Não*

*tem que ficar. Profissão feminista, qual é a vergonha disso? Eu acho que nós precisamos de muitos profissionais como se diz, mas elas não precisam ter vergonha de dizer que são."*

"I don't think that because you are an NGO means that you stop being progressive, that you stop contributing to the movement"

*"Eu não acho que, pelo fato de que você é uma Ong você deixa de ser avançado, que você deixa de contribuir pra o avanço do Movimento."*

"The articulations worked well, the articulation of indigenous women, women with disabilities, black women, everybody.... it was a very rich process. I think it is productive"

*"As articulações andaram legal, a articulação das mulheres índias, as mulheres deficientes, as mulheres negras, tudo mundo... foi um processo muito rico, acho que isso é produtivo."*

"now not only present at the meetings in order to denounce the absence of their issues on the agenda, but participating in the elaboration [of the Declaration of Brazilian Women], ensuring visibility to the race issue"

*"Não mais apenas as reuniões para munir-se de forças para denunciar a ausência de suas questões na pauta, mas a busca de elaboração conjunta dando visibilidade à questão racial"* (Ribeiro 1995: 455-456).

"We don't discriminate, if it is a prostitute, a domestic worker, an indian woman, a black woman, a lesbian, a feminist"

*"A gente não discrimina se é uma prostituta, se é empregada doméstica, se é índia, se é negra, se é uma mulher lésbica, se é uma feminista."*

"This [preparation] process was remarkable for its respect of diversities and for its multiplicity of organizational forms, a proof of the women's movement's richness. We come from different regions, race/ethnic groups, ages; we have different sexual preferences, physical and mental characteristics, religious and party allegiances, which express our cultural and social differences"

*"Este processo [de preparação] tem sido marcado pelo respeito às diversidades e pela multiplicidade das formas de organização, evidenciando a riqueza do movimento de mulheres. Somos de diferentes regiões, raça/etnia, idade, preferência sexual, características físicas e mentais, opções religiosas e partidárias, expressando diferenças culturais e sociais"* (text approved at the Conference plenary session on 16 June 1995).

#### Chapter 4: Facing the Dream of "Sisterhood" and the Pragmatics of Getting Things Done

"In terms of the organization of our work, I think that this was the greatest change. I think that this idea, this ideology that we had to create an organization, a collective, where everybody does everything, from sweeping the floor, emptying the toilet waste basket, these things that we did in the beginning..., I think that we realized that in practice we had to make some choices. And this is how different roles began to take shape. Although I think that this has always been a source of collective anxiety for us. But I think that we are trying, in this collective process, to do this differently [from the way it is done in the larger society]. I don't

know up to what point we are able to create an alternative organization since in fact, we are prisoners of a particular structure"

*"Em termos da forma organizativa de trabalho, acho que essa foi a grande mudança, eu acho que a ideia, a ideologia que a gente tinha de constituir uma entidade, um coletivo onde todo mundo faz tudo desde varrer o chão, recolher os papéis do banheiro, que a gente fez isso no início, eu acho que a gente viu que na prática a gente tinha que fazer algumas opções, e assim os papéis, aí os papéis se delimitaram, foram se delimitando de alguma forma, embora acho que isso sempre foi uma fonte de angústia coletiva, mas a gente, eu acho que a gente vem tentando nesse processo coletivo sempre tentar fazer isso de uma maneira talvez diferenciada. Não sei até que ponto a gente tem essa capacidade de fazer uma organização diferenciada na medida em que a gente está muito presa dentro de uma estrutura mesmo"*

"So, we have general assemblies with about 200 women, and during the last assembly for example, there were women who were against abortion. Women from the base cannot understand why we discuss abortion, and this woman, she is a UBM member, she organizes women in her neighborhood, etc. So we talked it over, the whole polemic surfaced and we voted."

*"Então a gente tem congresso de 200 mulheres et tal, no último congresso por exemplo, teve mulheres que eram contra aborto. Mulher de massa, não se conformava de a gente estar discutindo aborto, e ela é da UBM, ela organiza a UBM lá na região dela, então aí se debateu, teve toda a polêmica, e se votou."*

"The frontline is close minded" *"a linha de frente esta fechada"*

"We [some members] said that we thought that there should be a decentralization of [decisions and a clarification of] the subtle way in which decisions are said to be made by the team. We would need more...I don't know... in some fundamental cases I think that decisions should still be made by the team"

*"Nós [alguns membros] colocamos que achamos que deve descentralizar um pouco a forma sutil que tem de você falar que as decisões são tiradas da equipe. Precisaria ter mais, sei lá, em alguns casos fundamentais eu acho que deve ainda passar por equipe"*

"I hate it when people make a decision and then don't do what has been agreed upon, and here...Gee...I'm tired of seeing this happening. Somebody says she is going to do this...but absolutely nothing happens, do you understand? Because they do more what they feel like on the spur of the moment [...] So it is really weird, isn't it? working this way. It is way too disorganized."

*"Eu detesto as pessoas tomar uma decisão, depois não fazer as coisas e aqui... nossa... tô cansada de ver isso. Pessoa fala que vai fazer tal coisa assim...não acontece absolutamente nada, você entendeu? Porque o pessoal faz muito o que vem na telha, o que vem na vontade naquela hora [...] Então fica muito esquisito, né? você trabalhar assim, muito desorganizado demais."*

"Now, the advantage is that people do exactly what they want and so they do it with more fervor, you know? I think that's true"

*"Agora tem essa vantagem das pessoas fazerem também o que tem vontade, então fazem com mais gosto, sabe? Isso eu acho."*

"We live in a society which is very destructive, nobody wants to take the initiative to take care of the collective, of a collective cause, you know? It's everyone for oneself. But not us. In that way as well we are different, we do collective work."

*"Nós vivemos numa sociedade muito destrutiva, ninguém quer tomar iniciativa para cuidar do coletivo, uma causa coletiva, entendeu? cada um para si, e nós não, nós temos também essa diferença, nós fazemos trabalho coletivo"*

"Ah! I have always done collective work, I have never done individual work [...] when I realized that it was more difficult for women [...] then I decided to do collective work, to bring women together. This is why I went for organizing. I have always tried to organize."

*"Ah, eu sempre fiz trabalho coletivo, nunca fiz trabalho individual [...] quando eu vi que as mulheres era mais difícil a situação [...] então eu resolvi fazer um trabalho coletivo, juntar as mulheres, foi por isso que eu busquei a organização, sempre busquei a organização."*

"I am the secretary, in terms of bureaucracy, of the Statues of the Casa [...] but we function in a way..., let's say, more collectively. And these roles of secretary general, president, treasurer, this is not the way we work. So here it is more horizontal, we work as a collective. And I am a member of this collective, an active member of this collective, present in the everyday life of the organization from a practical point of view, from the point of view of some contributions, of thinking and such, building and pushing forward the work that the Casa develops."

*"Eu sou secretária, burocraticamente, a nível do estatuto da Casa [...] mas a gente funciona num regime, digamos assim, mais coletivo, em que esses papéis assim, secretaria geral, presidente, tesoureira, essas coisas não são a nossa forma de trabalhar, aí aqui é mais horizontal, a gente trabalha em um coletivo, então assim eu sou um elemento desse coletivo, um elemento ativo desse coletivo, que está no dia-a-dia no ponto de vista prático, no ponto de vista de algumas contribuições, de reflexões e tal, construindo, e levando a frente o trabalho que a Casa desenvolve".*

"Well, today I am more involved with research, with two research projects. One on women and AIDS and the other on maternity and work. I mean, these are two very different themes. And I am also in charge of the financial coordination of the organization. Basically that's it."

*"Bom, hoje eu estou mais envolvida com o desenvolvimento de pesquisa, de duas pesquisas. Uma pesquisa sobre mulher e AIDS e uma pesquisa sobre maternidade e trabalho. Quer dizer, assim, dois temas bem diversos, e eu estou também responsável pela coordenação financeira da entidade, basicamente é isso."*

"My situation is very undefined," or "it took a while to figure out what my role was," or "in the beginning my tasks were very undefined,"

*"Minha situação é muito indefinida," "Demorei para achar o meu papel," "no início as minhas tarefas não estavam muito definidas."*

"When you hire a secretary or a gynecologist, this question is more important, the need to have a person who understands a bit better where she is going to work, how she will be integrated in the work done, which is a little bit, which we consider a little bit different from that of another organization there in the private sector."

*"Quando você contrata mais uma secretária ou [...] uma ginecologista, as vezes essa questão aparece mais, a necessidade de você ter uma pessoa que entenda um pouco mais, aonde que ela vai trabalhar, como ela vai se inserir nesse trabalho, que é um pouco, que a gente considera um pouco diferenciado de uma outra entidade aí do mercado."*

"Well there is no doubt, I changed quite a bit, Gee! Even discovering certain values that when you work outside [of F&S] you don't perceive much, as a woman, as an individual. [...] I started liking myself a bit more. A bunch of doubts I had regarding myself, the fact of being a woman, what it means for society, what is my place in this society, how important I am in this society [...] [I asked Carol for specific examples of change] For example, now I feel more at ease to talk about sex, with my boyfriend. Now I can talk about it openly. I can also talk about abortion with a bit more liberty than in the past. I can also talk about these things with my daughter, she is 12, and soon she will be of age as we say. So I can talk with her quite a bit about these issues."

*"Ah, sim, não resta dívida, eu mudei bastante, nossa! Até descobrir determinados valores que a gente enquanto trabalha fora não percebe muito essa coisa, como mulher, como pessoa mesmo. [...] Eu passei um pouco a me gostar um pouco mais, um monte de dívidas que eu tinha com relação a minha pessoa, ao fato de eu ser mulher, o quê que significava pra sociedade, como é que eu conseguia me localizar nessa sociedade toda, assim, qual era a minha importância pra essa sociedade toda. [...] Eu por exemplo mudei na liberdade que eu sinto, por exemplo, de conversar sobre sexo, com meu namorado isso eu, hoje eu consigo conversar claramente. Consigo também conversar um pouco sobre aborto, um pouco mais de liberdade do que eu conversava antes, consigo também falar um pouco dessa coisa, a minha filha por exemplo está com doze anos já já vai ficar mocinha como se fala. Então eu consigo conversar bastante com ela a respeito [...]".*

"It ends up engendering actions which are very improvised. So we always end up improvising. So, for example, when we organize an activity with another NGO, for example, we are working on a women and Aids project with F&S. That's when we perceive the difference between an intervention that is only more or less structured and an intervention which is well-structured, and in this situation we clearly realize that we are at a disadvantage or that we have greater difficulties. Greater difficulties with the paperwork! We have difficulties with our administrative organization so things do not flow easily."

*"Acaba gerando também uma ação muito improvisada, então a gente acaba sempre improvisando então, por exemplo, quando a gente faz uma atividade com uma outra ONG, por exemplo, [...] a gente participa deste projeto de Mulher e AIDS com o pessoal de F&S. Então nessas horas, a gente... você percebe bastante essa diferença de uma ação mais ou menos estruturada com uma ação bem estruturada. E assim a gente percebe claramente que a gente tem uma desvantagem ou uma dificuldade maior, né. Uma dificuldade maior em lidar com os papéis, os papéis... não papéis sociais mais com os papéis, folha de papel! Você tem uma dificuldade de ter uma organização administrativa, então assim o fluxo é debilitado."*

"An NGO, because of the issue of project financing, and of projects which give a more systematic character to the work, will tend to be more...to have more...a more professional organization, things have more specific deadlines, more specific responsibilities, more specific goals, and it is not always the case that your work is guided by conjunctural emergencies."

*"Uma ONG por ter esta questão do financiamento de projetos e de os projetos dando um caráter mais sistemático ao trabalho, ela tende a ser mais... ter mais... uma organicidade mais profissional, as coisas tem prazos mais definidos, tem responsabilidades mais definidas, tem metas mais definidas, e, não necessariamente, se toca seu trabalho pelas emergências conjunturais."*

"Before her [the in-house accountant] we had to do all the fineprint work of accounting, this everyday accounting work, and we got the help of an accounting office. But with an accounting office you need to give them the accounts already in order so that they can close them. So it was not possible. We had to deal more and with this work and we were not there for that, that's for sure. So we hired an accountant really because of that. So it happened in stages: us from the technical team --the health team-- ended up taking care of the coordinating part of the work, the part that's related to the projects and reports. And we delegated the day-to-day work, which is really also the biggest part of the work, to Cleusa."

*"Antes dela [a contadora] éramos nós mesmo que fazíamos o miúdo da contabilidade, esse cotidiano da contabilidade e nós tínhamos uma assessoria contábil de um escritório, mas no escritório você tem que praticamente levar as coisas arrumadas, organizadas, para eles só fechar a contabilidade. Então não dava, a gente tinha que cada vez mais se ocupar dessa tarefa que pra qual a gente não estava aqui par isso, com certeza. Então a contratação da contadora veio muito nesse sentido. Então foi por etapas assim, o pessoal da equipe técnica, da equipe de saúde, a gente acabou ficando com a parte mais de coordenação, na parte mais ligada aos projetos e relatórios. Então a gente delegou pra contadora mais esse miúdo, quer dizer, o miúdo e o graude, na verdade, da contabilidade".*

"There was a period when... we started meeting, once a week...to try and organize the tasks, solicitations, etc. But this is what I told you, they [the technical staff] are not used to the way a firm works. The more the three of us met, the more we realized what needed to be changed, why it needed to change, we gave suggestions, we drew some conclusions and decided on a course of action and posted it on the management bulletin board. But this really disturbed them. I noticed that it disturbed them a lot... so we stopped meeting [...] Helena especially did not want to create any conflicts."

*"Teve um período que...começamos a nos reunir, uma vez por semana.... pra tentar organizar melhor as tarefas, solicitações, etc. Mas, foi aquilo que eu disse, elas [da equipe técnica] não estão acostumadas com a forma de uma empresa trabalhar. Por mais que nos 3 nós reunamos, víamos o que era necessário, o que teria que mudar, porque teria que mudar, dávamos sugestões, tirávamos conclusões e colocávamos uma definição. E colocava no mural de gerenciamento. Mas, isso mexeu muito..eu percebi que mexeu muito...com elas, daí nós paramos de nos reunir [...] Helena particularmente, não queria criar conflitos."*



"It is clear for me that F&S wants me to walk up to this line, so it is up to me to decide if I want to continue here with this limitation, or if I want to look for something where I want to grow more"

*"Está sendo claro pra mim que o F&S quer que eu ande até aqui, aí cabe a mim avaliar, se eu quero continuar ainda no F&S com essa limitação, ou se eu quero procurar alguma coisa que eu queira me expandir mais, né."*

"I do not feel restrained here at F&S in what I do. I give ideas, and they use my ideas and sign under"

*"Eu, até que eu não sou restringida aqui no F&S em fazer as coisas, não sou, tá. Dou muitas idéias, as idéias são até acatadas, assinadas por elas."*

"So in terms of our differences, I think that we are constantly learning, every time, to deal with our differences, differences of power, differences of capacity."

*"Então as nossas diferenças, eu acho que a gente está aprendendo isso sempre, cada vez, lidar com as nossas diferenças, diferenças de poder, as diferenças de capacidade."*

#### Chapter 5: The Labor of Love and Bread: Organizational Practices, Individual and Collective Identities

Footnote 1: "I think that the positive aspect [of this model of decision-making] is that people have to take charge, each person has to take charge of a responsibility, right? I mean, of what is going on in F&S. I mean, in reality, I think that this forces people to get involved more, to make decisions and to jump in, right?"

*"Eu acho, que o lado positivo [desse modelo de tomada de decisão] é de que as pessoas tem que assumir, que cada uma das pessoas tem que assumir um pedaço da responsabilidade, né! Quer dizer, um pedaço do que acontece no F&S. Quer dizer, na verdade, eu acho que isso força um pouco as pessoas a elas se envolverem mais, a elas tomarem decisões, a elas se jogarem um pouco, né!"*

"N - Your participation in SPT, do you see it as professional or activist participation?

Marina - I think that it is a mix. It is impossible to separate the two. I was hired by SPT to work 6 hours a day. I have to report my hours, I have to write reports, to fill in the weekly planner, to follow the timetable of the organization, so this is the professional side. I have to be competent and prepared for the work I do. Now, the type of questions that are SPT's main axis for intervention end up pushing the activist side. So, although I am paid to work 6 hours a day, there are days when I work 18 and I consider that it is a mix. But when I talk about the activities that I develop at SPT I do not consider them directly as an activist activity. I define them as professional. Now, my participation in the women's movement, which I do starting from SPT, starting from whatever is decided within the organization, but there I go with my activist experience as well. This is how I manage to define this situation."

*"N - A sua participação no SPT você considera como participação profissional ou participação militante?"*

*Marina - Eu acho que é uma coisa mesclada, não dá para separar. Eu sou contratada pelo SPT para trabalhar seis horas por dia, tenho que prestar conta das minhas horas, tenho que fazer relatório, planilha de horas, seguir o cronograma da entidade, enfim este é o lado profissional. Tenho que ser competente para fazer os trabalhos, tenho que me preparar para fazer os trabalhos, tal. Agora, o tipo de questão que o SPT tem como eixo para sua intervenção, acaba puxando o lado militante. Então, apesar de ganhar seis horas por dia, tem dia que eu trabalho 18, e eu considero que é uma mescla. Mas quando eu falo das atividades que eu exerço no SPT eu não coloco diretamente como uma atividade militante. Eu coloco como uma atividade profissional. E aí, no movimento de mulheres eu faço a partir do SPT, a partir de definição interna da entidade, só que aí eu vou com minha experiência de militante também, eu consigo definir assim."*

"Now the race issue, from the moment I started to be involved with this issue, this influenced my life within SPT" *"Aí a questão racial a partir do momento que eu comecei a envolver-me com ela, teve interferência na minha vida dentro do SPT."*

"So I got there half with the status of leadership, I got there assuming positions, writing documents, I don't know what else, coordinating roundtables, right? and rapidly I was involved in the process, with the people. These were very intense moments in my life." *"Então já cheguei lá meio com status de liderança na história, cheguei lá assumindo funções, escrevendo textos, não sei o que, coordenando mesas, né, e rapidamente me envolvi com o processo, com as pessoas. Foram momentos muito intensos na minha vida."*

"I think that F&S is a group which works simultaneously with both...with both possibilities. A remunerated professional work and a non-professional activity [...] For example, today...tonight there is a discussion about [the conference of] Cairo, I was... there are always other types of activities, different from the work itself."

*"Eu acho que o F&S é um grupo que trabalha simultaneamente com os dois... com as duas possibilidades. Tanto o trabalho profissional remunerado, como o trabalho não profissional.[...] Por exemplo, hoje a...a noite tem uma discussão sobre o Cairo, eu tava... sempre tem outro tipo de atividade do próprio trabalho."*

"Really, I like to work at something in which I believe from a political point of view. So, if I can reconcile my professional work with my political activism so that they become one, I will try to make it happen. I think that it is ethically correct [...] So, the fact that you work in a stinking job in which you do not believe in order to justify that in your free time you can go be an activist, I think that this argument...I am not saying that I have the right way of seeing things, [...] but for me it does not make any sense at all."

*"Realmente, eu gosto de trabalhar numa coisa que eu acredito no ponto de vista político. Então, aonde eu puder conciliar o meu trabalho profissional com a minha militância política, e eles serem a mesma coisa, eu vou tentar que isso aconteça. Eu acho isso eticamente correto [...] Então, pelo fato de você trabalhar numa coisa nojenta e que você não acredite, pra justificar que nas suas horas vagas, você vai militar, eu acho que é um*

*argumento... eu não tô dizendo que seja uma linha certa, [...] pra mim não faz [sentido] nenhum."*

"It is a choice you make, now I don't know, me for example, if I had to separate from my husband, if I would not have to make other professional options as well." *"É uma escolha que você faz, agora sei lá, eu, se eu me separar, se eu não vou ter que fazer outras escolhas profissionais também."*

"We have a degree of activism which is very different from one person to the next here at F&S" *"A gente tem uma cota de militância que é bem diferente de pessoa pra pessoa, aqui dentro do F&S."*

"Silvia - People know me, they know my life [...] It's not like I need to punch the timecard [...] I already had experienced this with my comrades [of the group she militates in], let's say, I already had this experience, but in a situation of activism, which is different.

N- A situation of activism which is different? So you consider your participation here as a job?

Silvia - It's both, it ends up being, it's complicated and I feel that the people who are here, they do not have this, because their experience has always been here [...] So sometimes there is a bit of a lack of what is the experience of work in the public service, you know this ugly, bureaucratic thing, but which helps you establish certain roles, define roles better, clarify certain things.

N - Of course, it is not like any firm!

Silvia - But at the same time it is a firm, I mean, there is no way we could treat it all as if it was...

N - As if it was what?

Silvia - Activism, an activist activity."

*"Silvia - As pessoas me conhecem, sabem da minha vida. [...] Não é você chegar, bater o ponto. [...] Era uma coisa que eu já tinha com as minhas companheiras [de um outro grupo], vamos chamar assim, eu já tinha isso, mas uma coisa de militância que é diferente.*

*N - Uma coisa de militância que é diferente? Então aqui você considera como emprego?*

*Silvia - É as duas coisas, acaba sendo, é complicado. E eu sinto que as pessoas que estão aqui, não tem isso, porque elas, pelo contrário, tem uma vivência sempre aqui [...] então as vezes falta um pouco essa experiência, essa vivência, de como que é uma repartição pública, sabe aquela coisa chata, burocrática, e tal, mas que ajuda a você estabelecer certos papéis, definem mais os papéis, clareiam mais certas coisas.*

*N - claro, não é como uma empresa qualquer!*

*Silvia - Mas ao mesmo tempo é uma empresa, quer dizer, não dá também pra tratar todo como se fosse...*

*N - Como se fosse o que?*

*Silvia - Uma militância, uma atividade de militante..."*

"Basically, I think that the greatest difference is that as activists people do the things they want, they are mobilized only by their consciousness, it is the great limit. Now here no,

here there is also a relation of delivering some service, of something. Here, and in any place where people are paid for what they do. I don't know [...] there are people, even the money that they receive to live, I don't know how to put it, it does not matter if they are paid or not, they do things. But this is a very special situation, I don't know, of some very special leaders. In general, when somebody receives money, I mean, when s/he lives from this work, I think that the relation changes. Then, I am not doing it only because this is important, I am going to do it also because if I don't do it I won't be paid, if I don't do it they'll fire me, if I don't do it this project will not be renewed. In other words, this other component."

*"Basicamente, eu acho que a grande diferença é que na militância as pessoas fazem as coisas se elas querem, elas estão mobilizadas unicamente pela consciência delas, é o grande limite. Agora aqui não, aqui existe uma relação que também é de prestação de algum serviço, de alguma coisa. Aqui, qualquer lugar onde haja essa coisa de a pessoa receber por aquilo que ela faz. Eu não sei, [...] tem pessoas que o dinheiro que elas recebem pra viver, não sei como dizer, independente desse dinheiro elas fazem as coisas. É uma situação particular, sei lá, alguns quadros muito destacados. De um modo geral, quando a pessoa recebe, quer dizer, ela vive daquele trabalho, eu acho que essa relação muda. Ai eu não vou fazer só porque aquilo é importante, eu vou fazer também porque se eu não fizer eu não recebo, se eu não fizer me mandam embora, se não fizer eu não consigo que esse projeto seja renovado. Enfim, esse outro componente."*

"I have always looked for a group to which I could belong" *"Eu sempre procurei uma coisa de pertencer á algum grupo."*

"At that time the only thing I had, as a characteristic, was to be a social worker, but this was not...it was not there that I wanted to invest emotionally!"

*"Naquele momento a única coisa que eu tinha, como uma característica, era ser assistente social, mas isso não era... não era aí que eu queria investir, né!"*

"Deise - I think that my participation in SPT reinforced a bit this experience [from the Board of Directors], but it reinforced and gave it another face. This thing as a woman, to have this identity, to feel as belonging to this group, this large group, it is a feeling of belonging, of identity, it is...to be a part of ...which really satisfies me because it is very large too. This is what I would like is to have... because SPT is a job, no? It is different from a women's group in which you participate.

N - Yes

Deise - So, I think that ...it would be great to have a type of belonging which would be more restricted within this women's question.

N - Very interesting what you are saying. Because I already noticed that NGOs are a mixed thing, the other women's organizations which are not professionalized have this thing of total belonging...

Deise - It is different, it is another relation. What is closer to the movement, a group, it can be a more formal group which has a routine...but I think that the big difference is remuneration. Because even when it is a movement, when some persons are compensated, the relation with money changes a lot the insertion of this person in the movement not

only on her part but also on the part of others, of what they expect from her. So it is a different relation and I think that an essential element that divides them is remuneration. It is not whether it is an NGO, if it calls itself an NGO, a group or a movement. The fact is that this is really complicated."

*"Acho que no SPT reforçou mais isso que eu já tinha um pouco [na diretoria do Conselho da Assistência Social], mas reforçou e deu uma outra cara, né? essa coisa enquanto mulher, de ter essa identidade, né? de me sentir pertencendo à esse grupo, grande grupo, né? mas é esse sentimento de pertencer, e de identidade, e de... de fazer parte, né? que me satisfaz totalmente porque é muito amplo também, né? o que eu gostaria era de ter... porque o SPT é um trabalho, né? é diferente de um grupo de mulheres que você participa.*

*N - Sim. Sim. Sim.*

*Deise - Então, acho que é... tem um... Seria legal ter um pertencer mais restrito também dentro dessa questão da mulher.*

*N - Muito interessante o que você me falou agora. Porque eu já percebi, as ONGs são uma coisa mista, as outras organizações de mulheres que não são profissionalizadas tem essa coisa de pertencer totalmente, né? Essa coisa...*

*Deise - É diferente, é outra relação. Que é mais próxima do movimento, é um grupo, pode ser um grupo organizado, pode ter uma rotina, pode... mas, e eu acho que aí a diferença se dá muito via remuneração, que mesmo se for um movimento onde tem pessoas liberadas, essa relação com o dinheiro transforma muito a inserção dessa pessoa no movimento, não só do lado dela como do lado das outras pessoas, do que as outras pessoas esperam dela. Então é uma relação diferenciada e eu acho que um elemento, que um divisor de águas é a remuneração, não é se é ONG, que se intitula como ONG, como grupo ou como movimento. E que é um "melê" muito complicado."*

"Dora - Now, I am quite critical of our position, you know, regarding... I think that we have to do something... I don't know, I have not discovered what yet, but together we will find out, all the NGOs. But we have to progress on this issue, we work for a certain quality of life and we do not guarantee it for ourselves (sounds of approbation from the others)

*N - It is Fulvia who brought this to my attention, she said... I can't remember exactly... that she had a friend who had commented that she was not going to have any retirement money.*

*Dora - I have been free-lance in research since I was 18 years old. I worked 13 years for the State, then I joined an NGO. You can imagine how much I am going to get (laughter). [...] Now we give up on certain rights which are already consolidated, because we give priority to the work that needs to be done, to a political vision, to what needs to be done. So the costs for our personal lives... are considerable."*

*"Dora - Agora, eu ando muito crítica com essa postura nossa, sabe, em relação.. eu acho que a gente tem que dar um jeito... não sei, não descobri ainda qual, mas a gente descobre juntos, todas as ONGs. Mas a gente tem que caminhar por essa coisa, a gente trabalha por a qualidade de vida e a gente não garante para a gente inclusive.*

*Nathalie - quem me chamou a atenção pra esse problema e a Fúlvia, que me falou disso... sei lá, de uma amiga dela que tinha comentado que não ia ter aposentadoria.*

*Dora - eu fui free-lance de pesquisa desde os 18 anos, trabalhei 13 anos no Estado, depois entrei em ONG você imagina quanto que vou receber (riso). [...] agora a gente abre muito mais mão de alguns direitos... que já estão mais consolidados, porque a gente prioriza muito mas o trabalho que tem que ser realizado, uma visão política, e aquilo que tem que ser feito. E aí os custos para a vida de cada um ... são muito grandes."*

"We have comrades who have been there for 8, 9, 6, 5 years who gave up on everything and on any other type of professional project, on their professions, to dedicate themselves to NGOs. I think that it is remarkable, I really think so [...] There are people who gave up on their retirement plan for 8 or 9 years, because NGOs are an exploitation of labor, including of those who lead them, they have no social rights, no nothing [...] What I can't understand is how our comrades fell for this one! All those that I know, here in São Paulo or in Minas Gerais, are university-educated women, with 10, 15 years of work in a given place, forced to leave everything behind to go open an NGO! From the point of view of their personal future, of their subsistence, it is an adventure with disastrous consequences, because NGOs do not secure their labor link, they hire you, they exploit you, from this point of view they exploit their own bosses, which is worse, because you are the boss of a thing and you are exploited by it."

*"Nós temos companheiras que estão lá, 8, 9, 6, 5 anos, que abriram mão de tudo e qualquer outro projeto profissional, das suas profissões, pra se dedicar às Ongs. Eu acho isso um mérito, acho mesmo. [...] Tem gente que abriu mão de ser aposentada, que há 8, 9 anos, porque as Ongs é uma exploração de trabalho, inclusive, de quem dirige, não tem nenhum direito social, não tem nada [...]"*

*Eu não me conformo é das companheiras terem embarcado nessa história. Todas as que eu conheço, conheço aqui em São Paulo, conheço em Minas, eram pessoas com Curso Superior, gente com 10, 15 anos num local de trabalho, obrigada a abrir mão de tudo isso para ir montar Ongs. Do ponto de vista do seu projeto de futuro mais pessoal, da sua sobrevivência é uma aventura com consequências desastrosas porque as Ongs não bancaram o seu vínculo empregatício, elas te empregam, elas te subempregam, nesse ponto de vista subempregam as donas delas o que é mais grave, porque você é a dona de um troço e você é subempregado daquilo."*

"There is no project that will make me quit my jobs, which guarantee this. I think that I am even protecting my potential for struggle. Pretty soon [with retirement] I will have more time for the movement and at my own cost, as my own boss. I go wherever I want to, I won't need anybody's charity."

*"Não tem projeto que me faça sair dos meus empregos, que me garanta isso, eu acho que estou preservando até meu potencial de luta, não vai demorar tanto vou ter mais tempo pra o movimento e às minhas custas, eu dona de mim. Vou onde quiser, não vou precisar da caridade de ninguém."*

"I would never work only here at F&S because of my kids and I am not the type of person who manages to live in serenity without knowing what tomorrow will bring. I am kind of anxious to want to have things."

*"Eu jamais ficaria só aqui no F&S, porque, por causa dos meus filhos, e não sou um tipo de pessoa que conseguisse viver com satisfação, disse de não saber o que vai ser amanhã, eu sou meio angustiada de querer ter as coisas."*

"A mobilizing organization" *"Uma entidade de mobilização"*

"A mass organization" *"Uma entidade de massa"*

"MU is a spontaneous movement," the other "[it's] a train because people get on and then get off, then get on again, [...] it does not really have the static characteristics of an organization, it is more like a movement, it fluctuates at the rhythm of the movement, at the rhythm of women's needs. So when it's moving and shaking out there, among women, it is moving and shaking in here as well, do you understand?"

*"MU é movimento espontâneo," the other: "[é] um trem porque as pessoas entram e depois descem, aí entra de novo, [...] ela não tem muito caráter estático de entidade, ela é mais movimento mesmo, ela vai ao sabor do movimento, ao sabor das necessidade das mulheres. Então tudo quando está em alta, algumas coisas das mulheres, está em alta aqui dentro, entende?"*

"There is a ton: [it's] a space for women to take their problems and resolve them." "to struggle for real citizenship for women" "to fight discrimination, ensure citizenship, and not only of women" "[for] positive discrimination", so that "women be respected, rights be really respected. For black people, indians, children rights as well" "to improve the situation of women as citizens, through this organization they perceive what their potential is"

*"Tem um montão: espaço para as mulheres ter lugar para levar os problemas delas e resolver." "lutar pela cidadania real das mulheres" "combater a discriminação, garantir a cidadania, não é só das mulheres" "discriminação positiva." "a mulher ser respeitada, direitos respeitos na realidade. Para negros, índios e direito da criança também" "melhorar a situação das mulheres enquanto cidadã, através da entidade elas percebem o seu potencial."*

"Stable organization" with stable employment" and "a solid experience and know-how, good contacts" and "influential," it is "a reference at the level of Latin America" which commands "great respect in the women's movement and among health professionals." *"Organização com estabilidade" com 'estabilidade de emprego' e 'solidez de experiência, de contatos, de know-how' and 'tamanho de porte' it is 'uma referência ao nível da América Latina' which commands 'grande respeito ao nível do movimento de mulheres e dos profissionais de saúde.'"*

"A distinguished position in terms of knowledge" *"Um lugar destacado em termos de conhecimento"*

"Serious and professional" *"Sério e profissional"*

"Trying to improve its performance" *"Procura se aperfeiçoar"*

"A great experience and amount of information and activities," had become "a reference point with regard to women's health services" and was "serious, very well-considered by other groups." A leader said "F&S like other NGOs [...] these are groups which are ...in the vanguard, in the frontline...with regard to everything...of the health question..."

*"Experiência e uma bagagem grande de informações e trabalhos," had become "ponto de referência com atendimento a saúde da mulher" and was "sério, muito bem visto por outros*

grupos". "F&S como outras ONGs, né [...] são grupos que estão...de vanguarda, a frente das... de tudo...da questão da saúde..."

"The clinic is still a very important reference for us. Very useful in terms of producing new practices" and "before [our] profile was more centered on the clinic," or "the clinic is still a priority."

"O ambulatório ainda é uma referência muito importante. Muito valiosa ao nível de produzir novas práticas" e "antes o perfil era mais centrado sobre o ambulatório", or "o atendimento ainda é a prioridade".

"The training aspect came in. Research and political articulation came in" "*Entrou o lado da formação. Entrou a pesquisa e a articulação política*".

(Footnote 5): "Influence the changes in the country, always in terms of women" "promote women's citizenship" "believing in the transformation of society in the long-run"

"Ter influência nas mudanças do país, visando sempre a mulher" "estimular a cidadania das mulheres" "acreditar na transformação da sociedade ao longo prazo"

"A more solidary society, denouncing the injustice of gender relations" "*sociedade mais solidária, denunciar as injustiças das relações de gênero*."

"Because F&S is a...a space where we deliver services, that is, we provide medical services. I mean, the majority... this is the only service in Brazil where this is done [...] the majority of women's NGOs, they have a more political role, where they organize..." Then she added "I mean, here, besides this political role—we are very active in the women's movement at the national, regional and global level [we provide services]"

"Pelo F&S ser um...um local onde presta serviço, ou seja, ele atende, né, quer dizer, a maioria...é o único serviço do Brasil que faz atendimento [...] a maioria das organizações não-governamentais de mulheres, elas tem um papel mais político, vamos dizer assim, né. Ela tem um papel mais político, onde ela organiza, faz..." Then she added: "quer dizer, aqui, além da gente ter esse papel político, também—nos temos uma atuação muito grande no Movimento de Mulheres tanto a nível nacional como latino, como mundial [...]".

"It makes things more difficult because sometimes you are busy with other things, but on the other hand, you guarantee that your activities are in sync with reality, with a demand, you know? It's not something we are coming up with, that we are looking for, on the contrary, here we do not look for anything, here things come to us, you see?"

"Difícil porque, as vezes, você tem outras coisas também que você tá tocando da mesma forma, mas por outro lado, você garante uma atuação colada numa realidade, numa demanda, sabe? Não é uma coisa que nós estamos imaginando, que nós estamos buscando, pelo contrário, aqui nós não buscamos nada, aqui as coisas vem, entendeu?"

"I think that what ensures participation, organizing, it is your willingness to be always open and receiving...receiving the demands from society" "*Eu acho que o que garante a participação, a organização, é a sua vontade mesmo de estar sempre aberta e recebendo... recebendo a demanda da sociedade*."



"So for example we decide that for two years we will lead a campaign against, not against but for, cancer prevention in the Eastern Periphery. Memisa decides to finance this activity and during two years you are going to make this happen. In the meantime, the Health Movement has a bunch of things to do, but you stay there, in this little corner where you decided you were going to launch a two-year campaign."

*"Então nós definimos, um exemplo, em dois anos vamos fazer uma campanha contra, contra não, pela prevenção de câncer na Zona Leste, aí a Memisa financia este trabalho e você tem dois anos para fazer este trabalho acontecer. Neste período o Movimento de Saúde tem um monte de coisa para fazer, mas você vai ficar lá, naquele cantinho, em que você se propôs de fazer a campanha de dois anos."*

"I want you to stay with me, not you to take me to work with you" *"É para você ficar comigo, não para você me levar pro seu trabalho."*

#### Figure 5-1: Original of Sande's members definition of their activities

*N - Então vocês considerem que trabalhar pra Sande, como que vocês consideram isso, é militância? é trabalho? é os dois?*

*Várias voces: "Os dois, ..." (Lilia) "é trabalho para caramba" (riso) "é a militância" ... (alguém) "são as duas coisas".. (Dora) "eu acho que a gente trabalha muito com a perspectiva de que, não sei se é de se tornar mais profissional, mas que a gente possa garantir essas coisas que a gente sente falta...que todo mundo precisa...o seguro-saúde... ser mas eficiente, de ir se aperfeiçoando mas continuando pensando, fazendo as coisas que a gente acredita [...]. Agora é uma opção de vida que possibilita você desenvolver suas idéias."*

*[...]*

*Nadia - eu particularmente vejo como uma...estou contribuindo para uma coisa que eu acho importante. se não eu não estaria aqui até essa hora [são quasi 9pm].*

*N- Pois é... (riso de todas)*

*Nadia - Eu acho que tem... até eu ia completar, né ... também não vamos deixar essa coisa dessa tristeza, desse peso, que o trabalho não é remunerado, dando direitos do jeito que a gente gostaria, porque eu acho que as pessoas que estão aqui de alguma forma, elas..., elas participaram de momentos muito difícil do país. [...] Deram a maioria das suas vidas por conta da mudança social do país. Quer dizer, eu acho que a Edimeire, a direção dessa instituição, de outras instituições, eu particularmente e outras pessoas aqui dentro, elas trabalharam sem ganhar nada, largaram suas famílias, né. Então não é o dinheiro que... hoje, não é o maior... Quer dizer, trabalhar pra mim na prefeitura e aqui ao mesmo tempo e no final de semana, é uma questão de princípio, sabe.. de escolha política, de... querer que a humanidade avance, evolua. Então eu acho... estar aqui significa eu estar realizando o ideal de mudança da sociedade, de evolução da humanidade, de colaborar com paz, por isso, por aquilo.*

*Dora- até é bonito demais (riso de todas)" [...].*

*Lilia - Eu acho que é um serviço (Edimeire: "de alta relevancia social" (riso) [barulho...]) Eu acho...de certa maneira eu estou prestando serviço, isso que a gente faz.*

*Porque... Agora a maneira como a gente faz isso é que vai dar o... a idéia de que tipo de serviço que eu faço. Por exemplo, eu faço.. eu tenho que trabalhar 20 horas. Tal, tal, tal. Então seria uma questão de serviço, nem, pura e simples. Vou lá, vou dar oficina, [...] a gente conversa, minhas 20 horas acabou. Porque assim, é uma coisa que tem que ser feita... É uma coisa que precisa ser feita, é um serviço que estamos fazendo, financiado por quem não sei, mas é uma coisa que a gente se propôs a fazer, uma ação educativa. Agora qual é a perspectiva dela, quanto tempo vou gastar, de que maneira vou fazer isso, qual é a política que está por trás, qual é a minha idéia que está por trás, qual é o meu ideal[...] Ai é que vale um outro nível, uma outra qualidade. Mas eu penso assim que é um serviço de alta (riso de Lilia) relevancia social."*

#### Chapter 6: Encounters and Misencounters: "City" and "Neighborhood" Feminisms

"Basically collective (claim made by a community, for whole of its members), they do not aim, therefore, at the expansion of individual rights"

*"Basicamente coletivos (reivindicação feita por uma comunidade, para o conjunto de seus membros), não se tratando, por tanto, de expansão de direitos individuais" (Citeli 1994: 17).*

"Something I had doubt about was about joining this commission, I was mixing up the women's commission with the feminists. Sometimes I saw the feminists as being very radical [...] Being a member of the women's commission does it mean being a feminist? I don't want to be one of these feminists, no. I want to be feminine. Not these feminists so.. I don't know...so [...] I don't know if you know what I want to say. So...that women have to work alongside men. The issue of respect, that men have for women [...] since you want to have your rights, here they are, be equal with men. And so, we are treated with much disrespect. We are not treated as women anymore."

*"Uma coisa que eu tinha dúvida, de como entrar nessa comissão, eu fazia essa confusão de comissão de mulher com as feministas, as vezes eu via as feministas muito radicais [...] Será que fazer parte da comissão de mulheres tem que fazer parte das feministas? Eu não quero ser aquelas feministas, não. Eu quero ser feminina. Não as feministas assim tão...sei lá...muito...[...] não sei se você está entendendo o que eu estou querendo dizer. Muito assim...que a mulher tem que andar junto com o homem. A questão do respeito, do homem ter com a mulher. [...] Já que vocês querem ter direitos, seus direitos são esses, seja igual ao homem. Então a gente é tratada com muita grossura, não é tratada como mulher mais."*

"In the feminist Encontros, the attendance changed and nobody wants to change the dynamic of the Feminist Encontros. They prefer putting an end to the Feminist Encontros, to say that they do not have a role to play anymore than to change the dynamic to accomodate the reality of popular women."

*"Nos encontros feministas, mudou o público e ninguém quer mudar a dinâmica dos encontros feministas, preferem acabar com os encontros feministas, dizer que eles não tem mais papel, do que mudar a dinâmica para poder adequar à realidade das mulheres populares."*

"But this is a problem do you know why Nathalie? Because when we organize a meeting in a location which is not good, people say "it's only because it is a meeting

with grassroots women that they put us in this place." When we choose a good place, people say that we are wasting money [...] So there is...something critical within the movement...and the class struggle...is reflected in each class context, do you understand?"

*"Mas isso é um problema sabe porque, Nathalie? Porque quando a gente faz um Encontro em instalações que não são boas, as pessoas dizem 'só porque é um Encontro que veio mulheres de base, botam a gente nesse lugar.' Quando a gente bota num lugar bom, as pessoas dizem que a gente está gastando dinheiro a toa [...] Então, tem uma...uma coisa crítica dentro do Movimento e o clima acerca...veio a luta de classe... se reinscreve dentro de cada contexto de classe, entendeu?"*

"What we feel in the neighborhoods is this, and this is something of which we complain a lot, in a few meetings in which we have been in the women's movement, and that is that the periphery was abandoned by the organized groups or by the NGOs, that's right. So, the initiatives in the neighborhoods have been, in terms of women's issues, have been individual initiatives.

N - From neighborhood women?

Cecilia - Yes. It has been from people who.. were already activists in the women's movement and who now live in the neighborhoods and who continue with these activities but isolated, more alone, you know; without the support of the organizations."

*"O que a gente sente na periferia, e isso é uma coisa que nós reclamamos muito, em alguns encontros gerais que a gente tem ido em reunião do movimento de mulheres, e que a periferia ficou abandonada pelos grupos organizados ou pelas ONGs, tá. E, então, as iniciativas de trabalho na periferia tem sido, no tema da mulher, nessa temática da mulher, tem sido de iniciativas individuais.*

*Nathalie - de mulheres de periferia?*

*Cecilia: E. Tem sido de pessoas que.. que já militaram no Movimento de Mulheres e que hoje estão morando na periferia e que continuam tendo essa atividade mais isolada, mais sozinha, sabe; sem contar com o apoio das entidades, tal."*

"Look, the women's movement from 88 til 95, [...] I think that a lot of things changed for the best, but some changed for the worse. So, for example, in 88 you could see a much more activist intervention on the part of the leadership of the women's movement, more...spontaneous, and much more committed. Let's say, it was something...the availability of people to do things, to conduct activities, was very strong, so the availability to exchange, between groups, even if there was a hierarchy in terms of organizational structure, of material resources between groups[...] there was a greater relation of partnership, in everyday practice. I think that it was greater than what it is today, I think that today the differentiation between groups widened quite a bit."

*"Olha, assim, o movimento de mulheres de 88 para 95, [...] eu acho assim, que muitas coisas mudaram para melhor, e algumas outras mudaram para pior. Então, por exemplo, em 88 você via uma ação das lideranças do movimento de mulheres muito mais militante, muito mais...no espontâneo, mais muito mais comprometida, vamos dizer assim, era uma coisa que era... a disponibilidade das pessoas para as coisas, para as atividades, ela era muito grande, então a disponibilidade para as trocas, trocas entre os grupos, então assim, embora houvesse já uma hierarquia a nível da estruturação, a nível de condições materiais entre os grupos [...]*

*Existia uma relação acho que mais de parceria, na prática mesmo, eu avalio que era maior do que hoje, hoje acho que se aprofundou bastante o..., essa diferenciação entre as entidades."*

"I would travel, and it wasn't only two hours! I lived over there in Campo Limpo and I was going to Itaquera, see what I mean? I brought an expert along [on some particular issue] [...] We'd get there, she gave her workshop which was a real success because she was an expert. Today, you cannot find anybody to do this. Today you have to go with your own capacity, you get there, you see what you can do. But bringing an expert along, today it is impossible, you see?"

*"Eu viajava, não era só duas horas não! Eu morava ali no Campo Limpo e eu ia lá em Itaquera, ce entendeu? Eu levava especialista comigo. [...] Chegava lá, ela ia dar uma oficina que era um verdadeiro sucesso, porque ela era especialista. Hoje você não acha não. Hoje você tem que ir com a sua capacidade, chega lá, você vê o que dá pra fazer. Mas você levar uma especialista hoje, e impossível, entendeu?"*

"The way I see it, Nathalie, I am pretty worried because I see a greater and greater gap, I see neighborhood women who are doing really important work, which could enrich the thesis of any academic woman, they are doing things which are often left to the side. I don't think that this is good for the movement. It is going to misrepresent feminism and people love to talk about...love to say such things."

*"Eu vejo assim, Nathalie, eu tô muito preocupada porque eu vejo cada vez mais é assim um distanciamento, vejo as mulheres populares que tem um trabalho importantíssimo, que poderia enriquecer a tese de qualquer uma das mulheres acadêmicas, que estão fazendo as coisas, muitas vezes ficam do lado. Eu acho que isso não é bom pro movimento. Vai assim descaraterizar o feminismo, que as pessoas adoram falar, adoram colocar defeito dizendo tais coisas."*

"Before MU was working a lot with the nuclei. MU gave a lot of importance to this work, not today but there was a time when we did" *"antes MU tinha muito trabalho com os núcleos. MU dava muita importância a isso, atualmente não, mas teve uma época que deu.."*

"Workshops, we do less and less of those, of really basic workshops. Before, we used to do a series of 12 workshops, in fact it was something quite enormous. It was basic training really, because it was helping to create a group, so that the group continued afterwards. You'd stay there for three months doing workshops and then discussed how the group should go on. And today, the workshops we do are more within events, or they are series of fewer workshops. And we do more and more seminars, courses, courses on a particular theme and general courses [...] we try to forward a bit of what is the feminist agenda, to provide a more conceptual discussion, of what gender relations are [...] of the methodology we have been using in working with women."

*"Oficinas, a gente faz cada vez menos. A oficina bem básica mesmo...Que antes, nos fazíamos oficinas de doze encontros, na verdade, era um troco assim enorme. Era uma formação básica mesmo, porque isso ajudava a grupalizar, ao grupo continuar depois. Você ficava lá tres meses fazendo uma oficina e depois discutia como o grupo continuar. Então hoje mesmo,*

*nas oficinas que a gente faz é mais dentro de eventos, ou uma oficina de menos encontros. E faz cada vez mais seminários, cursos, cursos por temas, tanto cursos gerais [...] se tenta passar um pouco do que é a plataforma feminista, dar uma discussão mais conceitual, o que são as relações de gênero [...] sobre metodologia de trabalho com mulheres."*

"At first, SPT was an organization which collaborated in our struggle, which collaborated as an equal partner in our struggle, then SPT provided us with *assessoria*, and recently it has lost this capacity of support, this capacity has diminished considerably, because of the lack of staff, and because it has taken another direction, ... it has abandoned a bit this work more up close with the [health] movement, now it is producing more materials and it has specialized a bit in the women's question, so as far as the [health] movement goes, it has lost a bit of its capacity to provide support. Now on women's issues it is still an organization which has the capacity to provide support."

*"No início o SPT era uma entidade que colaborava nas lutas, que colaborava de igual para igual nas lutas, depois o SPT ficou num papel de assessoria, e ultimamente ele tem perdido essa capacidade de assessoria, tem diminuído bem a capacidade, até por falta de profissionais, até por conta de que ele tomou outro rumo, ...abandonou um pouco esse trabalho mais próximos do movimento [de saúde], ficou num trabalho mais de produzir material, e ele se especializou um pouco mais na questão da mulher, então enquanto movimento [de saúde] ele perde um pouco a capacidade de estar assessorando, agora pra assunto da mulher ainda é uma entidade que tem capacidade de assessorar."*

"Then also with my physical difficulties, this activity which I enjoyed so much, in which I participated a lot, I mean in the streets, I have a lot of difficulties to participate [...] I can't be standing for very long, my legs hurt and my back too and I cannot carry banners anymore. Because I used to prepare a lot for the demonstrations and the street carnivals that we used to organize."

*"Depois também com minha limitação física, então essa atividade que eu gostava muito que eu participava muito que era de rua, eu estou com dificuldade em participar [...] não consigo ficar em pé, dói as pernas, a coluna também já dói e não consigo carregar as faixas. Porque eu me preparava muito pras passeatas e pros carnavais de rua que a gente fazia."*

"Those who know the work, who should be guiding us, these people do not give us their support, they are the first to be negative, 'no this won't work' or 'this doesn't work this way'" *"Aqueles pessoas que sabem, conhecem o trabalho, que deveriam estar orientando a gente, essas pessoas não estão dando apoio, são as primeiras a ser negativas, 'não isso não vai funcionar' ou 'isso não funciona assim.'"*

"They are tired of going there [to the neighborhoods]. Imagine Anabel with the level where she is at, going to do a consciousness-raising group!" *"elas não aguentão mais ir lá [to the periphery]. Imagina a Anabel com o nível aonde ela está, fazer grupo de reflexão!"*

"The people who are in the secretary of the Rede, not all of them but the majority, believe that they are above all this, that it is not their role to go to the street with a pamphlet in her hand and to talk to the population."

*"As pessoas que estão na secretaria da Rede, nem todas, mas a maioria, já se sente acima dessa condição, que ela não é mais para estar colocando o pé na rua com panfleto na mão, falando para a população."*

"Women start as activists in their organizations, then with publications and going for...the national and international level and there is no one to replace the absence of these people at the local level, no?"

*"As mulheres começam a militar nas suas entidades, com publicações e saindo pra...pra níveis nacional e internacional, e não tem gente que cobre a falta dessas pessoas no nível local, né."*

"At this time I had the idea of starting a study group...but we had to postpone organizing this group because everybody wanted to be part of it" *"E naquela época me pintou a ideia de ter um grupo de estudo que...menina, nós adiamos montar esse grupo porque aí todo mundo queria ir para o grupo de estudo."*

"I would like to do other things as well, to be able to write a bit, write a book and do...I would like to learn things now, I would like to become more of a student, no" *"Eu gostaria de me dedicar a fazer outras coisas também, poder escrever um pouco, poder escrever um livro e fazer um....eu gostaria de aprender algumas coisas no momento, gostaria de virar um pouco aluna, né."*

"I don't do this anymore. The women want to talk about knowing their own body, these things that we were doing 15 years ago [...] I've done it, I don't do that anymore. I won't walk until there anymore [...] let others do it, or then let them find a solution of their own."

*"Não faço mais isso. As mulheres querem falar de auto-conhecimento do corpo, essas coisas que nós fazíamos 15 anos atrás [...] já fiz isso, não faço mais. Não vou mas a pé até lá [...] que outras façam, ou então que elas se virem."*

"In the past a lot of people found legitimation as feminists, as professionals, thanks to neighborhood women. Then they got a job, they taught at the university, and abandoned the rest. Today no, today they charge for what they do!"

*"Naquela época muitas pessoas se legitimavam como feministas, como profissionais, por conta das mulheres da periferia. Aí elas conseguiram empregos, conseguiram dar aulas na Universidade, e largaram. Hoje não, hoje elas cobram, né?"*

"In the case of the agencies, I feel that it is not so much in terms of numbers but rather the issue of impact. They require, they expect to see "what is the impact of your action?" It can be quantitative but I think that it is more in terms of the visibility of the work. If you do something which is more visible, it leaves a big impression, more than let's say the microscopic work [ants' work] which is done there in Guaianazes or in Campo Limpo. I think that part of the work that Sande does is submerged from this point of view of the world of NGOs and of agencies. Because it is work we do over there in the very end of Guaianazes, in the very end of Campo Limpo. I mean, this will only be more visible the day we create a video about it. Then

everybody is going to say "Oh! what a great job you are doing! because then there is a visible product, a product which can circulate throughout the world. Do you understand?"

*"No caso das agências, eu sinto que não é tanto pela coisa propriamente dos números, mas a coisa do impacto. Há uma exigência, há uma expectativa assim, de 'qual é o impacto da sua ação?' Pode ser o quantitativo, mas acho que é mais a coisa da visibilidade do trabalho. Se você faz um trabalho que é mais visível, isso impressiona muito mais do que um trabalho digamos, um trabalho de formiguinha que é feito lá em Guaianazes, que é feito lá no Campo Limpo. Eu acho que uma parte do trabalho do Sande é um trabalho submerso do ponto de vista do mundo das ONGs e das agências. Porque é um trabalho feito lá no fundão de Guaianazes, no fundão do Campo Limpo. Quer dizer, isso vai se tornar visível o dia que a gente fizer um vídeo sobre isso. Ai todo mundo fala 'Oh! Sande, está fazendo um trabalho lindo e maravilhoso!' Porque aí é um produto visível, é um produto que pode circular o mundo. Entendeu?"*

"For you to obtain financing today, our work misses..., for example, the fact that SPT is an organization which works mostly from the demands of others, it is very good for the movement but it is really bad for an agency to trust us. Do you understand?"

*"E para você conseguir financiamento hoje, nosso trabalho ainda falta, por exemplo, o fato do SPT ser uma entidade que só trabalha com demanda que os outros pedem, é muito bom para o movimento, mas é muito ruim para uma agência confiar na gente. Você percebe?"*

"For many agencies, you have to see this as well, those who have been financing some groups for 20 years and they cannot see what is the impact and they cannot measure it. Publishing materials at least does two things, it gives an idea that it is being distributed, that in some form it is attaining people, and it gives an idea of what the group is able to systematize and organize its knowledge, it gives an idea of the theoretical strength of this group as well, no?"

*"Para muitas agências que também você tem que ver isso, quem ficou financiando vinte anos determinados grupos, não consegue perceber muito o quê que é o impacto e não consegue medir. A publicação de material pelo menos dá duas coisas, dá essa idéia de que se ele é distribuído, ele atinge de alguma forma as pessoas, e dá uma idéia do quê que o grupo está conseguindo sistematizar, organizar, dá uma idéia da consistência de conteúdo desse grupo também, entendeu, né?"*

"This is why, as far as the Bulletin is concerned, we made a great effort to make it super accessible, and in the case of the educational kits, we are making a great effort to pass them on to the groups [the neighborhood groups that were involved in the elaboration of those kits] with a training course, no? To integrate the passing on of at least part of the kit to the groups with which you work, no? as training of trainers."

*"E por isso enquanto boletim a gente fez todo esse esforço de ser um boletim super acessível, não sei mais o que, e no caso dos kits, a gente faz esforço de repassar com o curso de formação para o grupo, né? De integrar o repasse pelo menos parte do kit para os grupos que você trabalha, né? como formação de multiplicadores, né?"*

"We are 20 years old. What is our role today? SPT when I joined [in 1986] already had this preoccupation with the articulation, the systematization and the production of educational

materials. But SPT had never managed to turn this into something concrete [...] The Bulletin is our first positive experience."

*"Nós já existimos há 20 anos. O quê que é o nosso papel hoje, né? O SPT quando entrei já tinha essa preocupação com a articulação, com a sistematização, com a produção de materiais educativos. O que o SPT não conseguiu foi gestar [...] o boletim é a nossa primeira experiência positiva."*

"So, topics were discussed a lot with the questions that came out of the region and not so much with this issue of theoretical deepening, of this 'let's see how we can learn theoretically'" *"Então os temas eram discutidos muito a partir desse retorno das questões da região e menos com essa coisa de aprofundamento teórico, de 'vamos ver como e que a gente pode aprofundar teoricamente.'"*

"I think that it was in 92, 93 that I physically left the Eastern Periphery, with pain in my heart [...] I was still in the organization [...] responding to the demands for feminist training and, at that time, I was also a member of the coordination. So this was a very difficult change for me. At the same time I wanted it, I knew that it was important. In a way it ends up being a certain level of specialization, even if we don't call it that way, it is a way of improving your work. I thought this was good, but at the same time I was hurt to have to leave the Eastern periphery because my involvement with the region has always been very intense. So it was a moment of internal conflict, but a positive conflict..."

*"Acho que foi em 92, 93, aí eu sai fisicamente da Zona Leste, com dor no coração [...] fiquei na entidade [...] atendendo as demandas gerais de formação feminista e, na época também, compunha a coordenação e tal. Então assim foi uma mudança muito difícil para mim, ao mesmo tempo que eu queria, que eu achava que era importante. Na verdade acaba sendo um certo nível de especialização, mesmo que não se dê este nome, acaba sendo uma forma de ir qualificando o trabalho. Eu achava isto legal, mas ao mesmo tempo eu tinha dor de sair da Zona Leste porque meu envolvimento com a região sempre foi muito grande, então foi um momento conflituoso, mais um conflito positivo..."*

"If we want to go forward, we are going to need some *assessoria* because we..we are a bit at the limit of what we know. I think that we are getting behind in terms of women's issues, especially to discuss the social role of women, and stuff. There is this thing about the gender issue, and everywhere you go they talk about this, I think that we still have difficulties in understanding exactly what it is. It's a new word for the women of the social movements from the periphery..."

*"Se quiser avançar pra além disso, nos vamos precisar de assessoria, porque aí, a gente está um pouco no limite da atualização, acho que nós estamos ficando meio desatualizadas assim com as questões da mulher, da mulher, principalmente para discutir o papel social da mulher tal, tem essa coisa da questão de gênero, que todo quanto é lugar se fala disso, eu acho que a gente ainda tem dificuldade de sacar direito o que que é isso, uma palavra nova para as mulheres dos movimentos sociais, da periferia mais..."*



Chapter 7: Putting on the Roof before Laying the Foundations? Feminist NGOs, the United Nations and the State

"The methodology of the Feminist *Encontros* has exactly this function which is to break, to undo the rigid structure of other events, to provide joy and exchanges at all levels, it is a learning experience for all of us."

*"A metodologia dos Encontros Feministas tem mesmo essa função de quebrar, romper com as estruturas rígidas de outros eventos, de proporcionar alegrias, trocas em todos os níveis, esse é um exercício de aprendizagem para todas nós."* (Memoria do XI Encontro Nacional Feminista 1991:36).

"I think that you cannot expect more from a national meeting with that many people, you see? The meeting is more to...I think that what happens on the sidelines is much more important [...] The minimum that we need to ensure is that these people know that, every year they will meet and make plans together, do you understand? "

*"Eu acho que não pode acontecer muito mais num Encontro Nacional de tanta gente, entendeu? O Encontro é mais pra... eu acho que o que acontece nas paralelas é muito mais importante. [...] O mínimo que tem que resolver é que essas pessoas sabem que, todo ano vão se encontrar, fazem planos juntos, tá entendendo? "*

"This has been pretty difficult, there was no space left in people's agendas for the Rede [at the municipal level.] I understand that last year and this year have been very difficult, there have been several important events at the international level, like the Cairo meeting and this year with the evaluation of the decade in Beijing and it is necessary for people to go. But I think that we cannot let go of local issues to take care of the big events [...] And next year, we have the [8th] international conference on women's health [organized and held in São Paulo.] And I am worried because things are gonna run the same way!"

*"Isso tem sido assim muito difícil, não tem sobrado espaço na agenda das pessoas pra dar mais prioridade à Rede [ao nível municipal]. Entendo que foi assim, o ano passado e esse ano, muito difícil, aonde teve assim várias coisas importantes a nível mundial, como o encontro do Cairo e esse ano aqui o encontro da avaliação da década em Pequim, que é necessário que as pessoas vão, mas eu acho que a gente não pode abrir mão das necessidades locais por conta das coisas grandes que estão acontecendo. [...] No ano que vem, nós temos o [XIII] encontro internacional de saúde [organizado em São Paulo]. E isso me preocupa porque as coisas vão correr da mesma forma! "*

"Look! I don't know why this thing of this bill was passed in such an imperceptible way! I don't know what... and I include myself in this story because I am responsible, I am the representative of the Rede...I don't know how we let this ...how this escaped us like this. Because we did not see this bill in progress. [To the others:] Somebody has any idea? The sterilization bill? It seems that we follow up better on what is happening at the Congress than at the municipal legislature!"

*"Olha, eu não sei porque esse negócio desse projeto passou de uma forma tão...imperceptível...não sei o que a... e estou me incluindo nisso porque eu sou responsável, eu sou representante da Rede... eu não sei como a gente deixou... como isso escapou assim."*

*Porque a gente não viu esse projeto tramitando. [Para as outras] Alguém sabe ? O projeto de esterilização? Parece que a gente acompanha melhor o que passa no Congresso Nacional do que na Câmara Municipal!"*

"In the first place, we say that there is not enough time and it has always been like this: we have to go, we have to do this, we have to discuss that, we have to think about this... quickly, everything must be quick... Who is imposing this rhythm on us? This does not leave us any time for dreaming, daring or creating..."

*"Em primeiro lugar, dizemos que o tempo é muito curto e tem sido sempre assim: tem que ir, tem que fazer, tem que discutir, tem que pensar...Rápido, tudo muito rápido... Quem impõe esse ritmo para nós? Assim não dá tempo nem pra sonhar, ousar ou criar...." (CIM 1994:9).*

"I would say that in a context of globalization and internationalization of social movements and of social questions, I think that if one aspires to intervene at the national and global levels, there is no way you can avoid the NGOization process, no? If you limit your scope of action to the local level of your neighborhood, or of your city, it is possible to maintain the earlier model of an association which functions without resources, without infrastructure, on the week-ends, depending on the free-time of its members which keeps getting rarer and rarer. But when you start thinking that this is a very limited scope of action, very limited for the processes that are occurring at the global level, you have to develop a professionalized structure, from Monday to Friday, and then comes Saturday, and holidays, carnival, Christmas and everything, because this is how NGOs work..."

*"Eu diria que num quadro de globalização e de internacionalização dos movimentos sociais, das questões sociais, eu acho que se pretende interferir a nível nacional e global, não tem como se ficar fora do processo da Ongização. Não é? E se você se limita a uma atuação a nível local do seu bairro, ou da sua cidade, é possível se manter um modelo anterior de uma associação que existe sem recursos, que existe sem infraestrutura, que funciona nos finais de semana, com o tempo livre que é cada dia mais escasso das pessoas. Mas se você começa a achar que esse é um nível de interferência que é muito limitado, e muito pequeno pros processos que estão acontecendo a nível mundial, não tem como você não desenvolver uma estrutura de trabalho profissionalizado, de segunda a sexta-feira, sábado, vem o feriado, carnaval, natal e tudo, porque é assim que as ONGs trabalham..."*

"I think that both are important. Because you cannot put on the roof before laying the foundations! So it is quite basic: first taking care of what is happening around us and then after that, or at the same time, start participating in other larger things [...]"

*"Eu acho que as duas são prioritárias. Porque a gente não pode botar o telhado na casa antes de fazer o alicerce! Então isso é básico: primeiro cuidar das coisas que estão ao nosso redor pra depois estar, ou ao mesmo tempo estar fazendo também a participação da gente em outras coisas maiores [...]"*

"It's no good insisting on working up there and, on the 28 of May, to organize a demonstration on the Paulista [most important avenue in São Paulo] with 30 women! I mean, where is the work of the whole year to bring a bunch of women to the demonstration for the legalization of abortion or against maternal deaths in Brazil? [...] The Campaign that the Rede decided upon

during the last annual meeting [for the legalization of abortion] what was done was really just a poster! The campaign was not done. I went to a public act, it was only me who could go from the Casa, it was an ecumenical act organized by the Catholics for Free Choice, there were...there were not even 30 women...some 25 women...What you are doing does not stop the people who were passing by. This means that the job was not done. Because when you are there with a lot of people, of course passers-by are going to stop to see what it is all about... and the press comes to cover the event!"

*"Não adianta mais você ficar lá encima e você fazer no dia 28 de Maio, uma manifestação na Paulista com 30 mulheres! Quer dizer cadê o trabalho de durante um ano todo para levar bastante mulher para fazer manifestação pela legalização do aborto o contra as mortes maternas no Brasil? [...] A Campanha que a Rede tirou no último encontro do ano passado [para a legalização do aborto] o que foi feito foi apenas um cartaz. Não foi feita a campanha! O ato que fui, só eu que pude ir da Casa, foi um ato ecumênico organizado pelas Cáticas pelo Direito a Decidir, tinha... não tinha 30 mulheres, tinha uns 25... Você não faz alguma coisa que você parasse as pessoas que estavam passando ali para ver. Isso significa que está faltando esse trabalho. Porque quando você está lá com bastante gente, claro que as pessoas vão parar para ver o que é. A imprensa vem cobrir!"*

"It is this thing about the partners I am going to choose to organize my strategies. So, I organize a small seminar, or a conference to which I invite so-and-so who's important here, and so-and-so who is important there, like for that seminar on educational practices, no? Who is invited for the seminar?...women who work in the State Health system and who have a feminist perspective, women who work in the Health Department, women from financing agencies who fund health issues, and women from feminist NGOs who work with training. Me, if I was to organize a seminar, here we would invite the people from the trade-unions, the people from the Federation of Popular Movements, we'd call these women as well [from the State and federal health system] but why? because our conception of strategy is that much politics is not limited to that [institutional] space. It is a space crucial for you to mobilize, to organize an expressive, massive, strong articulation so that this movement makes claim and pressures the State to take care of public policies. Now the other vision is different, it is that change in public policy will result from our involvement in the Department and state systems, from a little lobbying here with this representative or with that senator. It is me going to this seminar to Nicaragua where there will be people from the World Bank, from this or that, who will give money to the Health Department. I mean it is another type of political articulation, involving other actors, no?...which emphasizes other strategies. Basically, this is the difference between these two conceptions."

*"E aquela coisa assim de com quem que eu vou pensar minhas políticas. Então eu faço um pequeno seminário, ou organizo um encontro não sei o que, que eu chamo fulana que é importante aqui, fulana que é importante ali, que nem esse seminário de práticas educativas, né? Quem é convidada pro seminário?...mulheres que trabalham na Secretaria de Saúde e quem tem uma visão feminista, mulheres que trabalham no Ministério da Saúde, mulheres de agências financiadoras que financiam a saúde, e mulheres de ONGs feministas que trabalham com treinamento. Eu, se fosse organizar um seminário, [Aqui] a gente ia chamar o povo do movimento sindical, o povo da Central [dos Movimentos Populares], ia chamar também essas mulheres [das Secretarias, do Ministério] mais ia por quê? porque a*

*concepção de estratégia de muita política não é só esse espaço [institucional], é o espaço fundamental de você criar mobilização, de você criar uma articulação expressiva, massiva, com força, pra esse movimento provocar uma demanda por parte do Estado que ele atenda as políticas públicas. Agora, a outra visão não é essa, é que a política pública vai vir via nossa inserção nas Secretarias, no Ministério, um lobbizinho com aquele Deputado, com aquele Senador. É aquele seminário que eu vou lá na Nicarágua que vai ter gente do Banco Mundial, desse, daquele, que vai dar dinheiro pro Ministério. Quer dizer, um outro tipo de articulação política que envolve outros atores, outras instâncias, né? Que privilegia outras estratégias. Essa basicamente é a diferença de concepção"*

"1) Did USAID want to impose an organizational structure on us? 2) Why is USAID not using and channeling resources via the structures already built by women throughout these two decades of the existence of our movement? 3) Don't Latin American feminists have the right to establish their own process and to decide if they are going to, how they are going to and with whom they are going to evaluate the decade and build their own structures (if necessary) or strengthen those already existing."

*"1) A USAID queria impor uma estrutura organizativa para nós? 2) Por quê a USAID não utilizava e repassava os recursos nas estruturas já construídas pelas mulheres nessas duas décadas de existência do nosso movimento? 3) As mulheres latino-americanas não têm o direito de estabelecer seu próprio processo e decidir se vão, como vão e com quem vão avaliar a década e construir suas próprias estruturas (se assim fosse necessário) ou fortalecer as existentes?" (CIM 1994:5)*

"The truth is that we were surprised and hit by a meeting which, in our view, should have been organized later, after we had brought to the process a greater number of organizations in the country"

*"Na realidade, fomos surpreendidas e atropeladas por um encontro que, segundo nossas perspectivas, deveria se realizar mais tarde, quando tivéssemos articulado um número maior de entidades do país" (CIM 1994:7).*

"The groups involved in the Cairo preparation here were limited to 6 NGOs. Ah! we jumped on it! We made a fuss! Beijing is different! For Beijing, it is the movement that decides and we stopped this nonsense! Cairo was a guetto! but not Beijing! And we made sure it did not happen again. Suddenly, we had 6 NGOs organizing the discussion around Cairo...[...] without any coalition structure. Yes, they retained information, did everything...they started organizing Cairo and Beijing during Eco-92 And we know that there's a bunch of people who took decisions for Beijing during Eco-92. But now, they're done for because the feminist movement realized what was happening and undid it all. Starting here in São Paulo! I mean, you have a place in our hearts, you are legitimate members of this movement, the feminist movement... You are legitimate. But you're not the boss! You're not the boss! And you're only going to talk in its name if we give you the power to do so."

*"A articulação do Cairo aqui, se restringiu a 6 ONGs. Ah, nós fomos encima! Detonamos! Pequim é diferente! Pequim quem define é o movimento e acabamos com essa história! O Cairo foi um gueto! mas Pequim não! E nós atentamos para isso. De repente tínhamos 6 ONGs organizando a discussão do Cairo...[...] sem trazer nenhuma instância. Sim,*

*esconderam informação, fizeram tudo... Começaram a organizar Cairo e Pequim na Eco-92. E a gente sabe que tem uma porrada de gente que fechou compromissos pra Pequim na Eco-92. E agora, tá ferrada! porque o Movimento Feminista se deu conta disso e desmontou. Começando aqui em São Paulo! Quer dizer, vocês cabem no nosso coração, vocês são legitimamente desse Movimento, dito Feminista, dito da...São, São legítimas. Mas não são donas! Não são donas! E só vão falar em nome dele se a gente delegar poderes pra isso."*

"The women's movement autonomy, its organization, the rhythm imposed by our institutionalized agendas, the bureaucratization of feminism, the excess of power of hyperfinanced NGOs who have the information, in other words, the need to democratize our movement"

*"A autonomia do movimento de mulheres, sua organização, com o ritmo imposto pelas nossas agendas institucionalizadas, com a burocratização do feminismo, com o excesso de poder das ONGs super-financiadas que detém as informações, enfim, com a necessidade de democratizar o nosso movimento" (CIM 1994:12).*

"You need to deal with an increasing mass of information, which is every day more complex...you need to be able to devour pounds of daily information. Just in terms of the Aids issue, if we had to read what is being published, what we get here every day on Aids, I would have to sit here every day and not do anything else in my life! So we need to select this information and to divide the tasks. You have to work as a team, with people who are more and more specialized. So there are those who deal with Aids, those who deal with abortion, those who deal with sterilization, those who deal with the Race item [on censuses and other health information-gathering instrument]. Those who deal with sexuality. You have to have a collective work process and specialization with regard to information, you need to develop given skills."

*"Você tem que lidar com uma massa de informação que cada dia é maior, e cada dia mais complexa... você tem que ser capaz de devorar quilos de informação diária, se você for pensar só a questão da AIDS, se for só pra ler o que se publica, o que chega diariamente aqui a respeito da AIDS, eu teria que me sentar pra ler diariamente tudo que chega e não fazer mais nada na vida, então tudo isso tem que ter todo um processo de seleção também, da informação, de divisão do trabalho. Você tem que trabalhar em equipe, as pessoas tem que cada vez mais se especializar, então quem é que cuida da AIDS, quem é que cuida do aborto, quem é que cuida da esterilização, quem é que cuida do quezito côr, quem cuida da sexualidade, você tem que ter processos coletivos de trabalho, de especialização em relação a questão da informação, habilidades tem que ser desenvolvidas...."*

"[We also need] to be training new people, allowing people in the region, from less famous organizations, who are more... who have more difficulties in taking the front line in the Rede, at the national and international level for example. [We have to] train, allow these persons to assume new roles as well. But even this has been very difficult, there has not been any space left in people's schedule."

*"Pra estar também formando as pessoas novas, dando condições a nível regional das pessoas, das entidades menos famosas, que estão mais...que têm mais dificuldades de estar na frente das questões da Rede, por exemplo a nível nacional e internacional, de estar dando*

*formação, condições para que essas pessoas também venham a estar assumindo novos papéis. E até isso tem sido assim muito difícil, não tem sobrado espaço na agenda das pessoas.."*

"We are going to train people in the history of feminism and with public speaking workshops, and on the [socio-political conjuncture... do you understand? Training for public participation, do you understand?"

*"A gente vai capacitar na história do feminismo, oficinas de fala pública, conjuntura...tá entendendo? Capacitar mesmo pra atuação pública, tá entendendo?"*

"She [the professionalized feminist] has access to information from the whole world, and money, there are people paying for this person to go all over the world, and they go [...] But what cannot happen is the problem that we are now having in Brazil, especially in the feminist movement, [which is that] this story of getting money generates power. We went through a period, especially here in São Paulo, when feminist NGOs thought they were the Movement. And we do not think that they are the movement."

*"Ela [the professionalized feminist] tem acesso a toda informação do mundo inteiro, e tem dinheiro, tem quem banque para essa pessoa estar no mundo inteiro, e elas vão."... "o que não pode acontecer, é o problema que a gente vem tendo no Brasil, particularmente no Movimento Feminista, essa história de ter dinheiro, gera poder. Nós vivemos um período, particularmente, aqui, em São Paulo, em que as Ongs Feministas achavam que elas eram o Movimento. E a gente acha que elas não são o Movimento."*

"Recently, the conquest by organized popular sectors of new institutional spaces (participation in congress and in municipal administrations) has broadened the responsibility of NGOs. From a critical analysis of society and the State, they were called to participate in the elaboration of concrete proposals of public policies."

*"Mais recentemente, a conquista pelos setores populares organizados de novos espaços institucionais (participação no parlamento e em administrações municipais) ampliou a responsabilidade das ONGs. Da análise crítica da sociedade e do Estado, elas foram chamadas a participar da elaboração de propostas concretas de políticas públicas."* (Caccia Bava 1995a:5).

"The National Conference, in approving proposals and celebrating the seriousness of the process, became a benchmark and the performances elaborated by the state delegations and the artists especially invited for this event, became a demonstration of why feminism, beyond a political movement, is a cultural movement concerned with the material and spiritual necessities of human beings."

*"A Conferência Nacional aprovando propostas e celebrando a seriedade do processo transformou-se em um marco e as performances elaboradas pelas delegações estaduais e artistas especialmente convidadas para esse evento, uma demonstração de porque o feminismo, para além de um movimento político, é um movimento cultural comprometido com as necessidades materiais e espirituais dos seres humanos."* (Articulação de Mulheres Brasileiras 1995:3.)

"It would have been good to change a bit for a more dynamic methodology, which involves the women more...you could have groups too, but with a dynamic which makes people participate and talk. I think it is good to have groups, but not all speak and so, with 700 people, I think we should use some things that we used in the past...we should use the techniques used in workshops. These things work! Maybe just having various themes and each person choses one she likes, to have a greater participation of the women, especially our grassroots women who are not used to talk but to do things, do you understand? That way, you give these women this opportunity. With the form...this dynamic we used today, those who speak more are us who have been active in the movement for some time already. "

*"Seria bom mudar um pouco pra uma metodologia mais dinâmica, que envolve mais as mulheres...você poderia ter até grupos também, mas com uma dinâmica que faz com que as pessoas se coloquem também e falem. Eu acho bom essa coisa do grupo. É bom, mas nem todo mundo fala e então, são 700 pessoas, acho que deveria usar algumas coisas, que se usou anteriormente...que se use as técnicas de oficina. Essas coisas funcionam, nem que for por temario, cada uma se escreve num tema que é afins, para ter uma participação maior das mulheres, principalmente nossas mulheres de base mesmo que não são habituadas a falar mas mais a fazer, entendeu? Ai você dá essa oportunidade para essas mulheres. É da forma...nessa dinâmica que a gente estava utilizando hoje, quem está falando mais somos nós que já atuamos faz algum tempo..."*

#### Chapter 8: Up the Purse's Strings: NGO relations with Donor Agencies

"One notes, in particular, that North-American cooperation has increased considerably for Latin American NGOs as European agencies started prioritizing Eastern European countries due to their political opening "

*"Consta, inclusive, que tem aumentado vertiginosamente a cooperação de agências norte-americanas para ONGs latino-americanas, na medida em que as agências européias passaram a priorizar os países da Europa Oriental em razão da abertura do Leste"(Doimo 1994: 21)*

"Then questions started being raised by governmental agencies, the media, public opinion: what you are doing, these charity projects? Are they political interventions in a foreign country? Can we trust the way you are allocating the funds? what are the results in concrete terms? Are the results better than those of governmental cooperation?" (Medias ONGs 1993:15)

*"Logo começaram as perguntas feitas pelas agências governamentais, pela mídia, pelo público: O que vocês estão fazendo? São projetos de caridade? É uma intervenção política nos assuntos de um outro país? Podemos confiar em vocês na forma de alocar os fundos? O que resulta, concretamente? Os resultados são melhores do que os da cooperação dos Estados?" (Medias ONGs 1993:15).*

"What they are saying is the following: that the agencies have been investing in Latin America for 20 years and that poverty has not changed one bit. This I have heard a number of times [...] Now, in these more recent changes, what the European agencies and the World Congress of Churches are doing, they are redirecting the money to Africa, to Eastern Europe and so on. "

*"O que eles dizem é o seguinte, que as agências, elas investiram 20 anos na América Latina, nas Ongs, e que a situação de pobreza da América Latina não mudou nada. Isso eu ouvi já, varias vezes [...] Agora, nessas novas mudanças, que as agências europeias e o Conselho Mundial das Igrejas estão fazendo, então estão desviando o dinheiro para a África, pros países do Leste-Europeu e tal."*

"European and Canadian agencies which are of interest to us here were born rather independently from their governments and especially starting in the 60s (with a strong influence of FAO's campaign against Hunger committees) intensified their relations with trade-unions and political activist groups in their own countries. Hence they developed ideas and actions criticizing the international policies of their governments" (Landim 1993:211).

*"As agências européias e canadenses que nos interessam aqui nascem de forma razoavelmente independente de seus governos e sobretudo a partir da década de 60 (com forte influência dos comitês da Campanha Mundial contra a Fome da FAO) intensificam relações com grupos de ativismo sindical ou político dentro de seus próprios países, desenvolvendo ideários e ações críticas com relação as políticas internacionais de seus governos" (Landim 1993:211).*

"For example, in Holand, 10 years ago it was normal that for your professional to be also your social life. Maybe it is linked to the fact of being young, of traveling easily, of not having a family and then the years go by, people start having a family and want a private life. And your work being voluntary, being paid, is no longer your only life.

N - I think that it is something that I have seen here in the movement as well.. because the women are becoming older, no? So they want to spend more time with their family.

Marieke - No, no, I know... but this is something that I saw in Holland, this is a change of culture in Holland.

N - Ah I see that people want more of a personal life.

Marieke - Yes, and it is something which is happening concomitantly with the professionalization of organizations and this forces us to become more efficient, because in general, our objectives do not diminish. So the same amount of work that you used to do in 60 hours, now you have to do in 40."

*"Por exemplo, na Holanda, hace 10 anos foi muito mais normal que tu vida profisional foi tambien tu vida social. Talvez isso tem a ver com ser estudante, mudar muy facil, estar sem familia e assim os anos passam, as pessoas começam com uma família e querem uma vida privada. E o trabalho sea voluntário, sea pagado no es tu única vida.*

*Nathalie: Acho que é uma dessas coisas aqui no movimento que estou vendo... porque as mulheres estão ficando mas velhas, ne? Então elas querem passar mais tempo com a família.*

*Marieke: Não, sei!... mas é algo que eu vejo na Holanda, e que es un cambio de cultura na Holanda.*

*Nathalie: Ah sim, que as pessoas querem mas vida pessoal.*

*Marieke: Sim, é que isso vai junto com a profissionalização da organização e que isso te obriga tambien a ser mas eficiente, porque em geral os objetivos não diminuem. Então o mesmo trabalho que antes fazia em 60 horas, agora tem que fazer em 40 horas."*



"Before we were also much more solidary, we had a political perspective and everybody knew that capacitation and popular education were very important. So we were financing many of these projects, and many other types of projects which were important, without really thinking about how to measure the results. Then with professionalization and with less solidarity... because in a way, Novib, with its professionalization became less solidary because some people joined the organization more as a career option than with commitment. So this also changes a bit the organization as a whole...

N - Gee!! That's a surprise!...

Marieke - Wages at Novib are not high so those who want to earn a lot of money, it is better for them to look for a firm...

N - Of course. So it is a similar dynamic as among women's NGOs...

Marieke - Yes. It is not only because of solidarity that we are working, we also have a certain level of professionalism."

*"Antes estávamos também muito mais solidaria, desde essa perspectiva política e todo mundo sabia que capacitação, educação popular ouve muito importância. Então financiávamos muito esses projetos, e muitos outros tipos de projetos porque foram muito importantes, sem pensar muito em como medir os resultados. Então com a profissionalização e com menos solidariedade... porque assim, Novib, com a profissionalização é também menos solidaria. porque entram pessoas na organização que trabalham mais desde uma perspectiva profissional do que com compromisso. Então isso cambia também um pouco a organização em total...*

*Nathalie: Puxa vida!!...Estou surpresa!...*

*Marieke: Os salarios na Novib não são altos então os que querem trabalhar para ganhar dinheiro, é melhor buscar uma empresa...*

*Nathalie: Com certeza. Então é a mesma dinamica que nas ONGs de mulheres...*

*Marieke: Sim. Não é só por solidariedade que estamos trabalhando, temos também uma profissionalidade."*

"Historically there has been a change in the quality of the relations with agencies. In the past, the majority of NGOs started working with a political option of social transformation. The relationship between a large number of agencies and NGOs in the South was very personal and was fundamentally characterized by a relationship between political partners. There was a variety of relations which were explicitly inserted in the same political network. Today, managers of agencies have a "technical" profile. As a result, the perspective and language are different. It is certain that we cannot (neither do we want to) go back to the activist life of 30 years ago. But we cannot put political options in quotation marks. This is fundamental: these options are part and parcel of the priorities of medium size NGOs" (Medias ONGs 1993:18). *"Historicamente, constata-se uma mudança na qualidade das relações com as agências. Em décadas anteriores, a maioria das ONGs começou o seu trabalho como uma opção política de transformação social. A relação entre grande parte das agências e as ONGs do Sul era muito personalizada e tinha como característica fundamental ser uma relação entre parceiros políticos. Havia uma gama de relações que estava explicitamente inserida na mesma rede política. Hoje, o responsável na agência tem perfil "técnico". Consequentemente, as perspectivas e linguagens são diferentes. É certo que não se pode (nem se quer) retornar àquela vida de militância que se tinha há 30 anos atrás. Mas não se pode colocar as opções*

*políticas entre aspas. Isto é fundamental: estas opções estão dentro do esquema de prioridades das médias ONGs" (Medias ONGs 1993:18).*

"[It is not only because of solidarity that we are working, we also have a certain level of professionalism.] So we are now paying more attention to what is happening. It is not like before when we said 'Well great! We give you the money and you start working and one day we will meet so you can tell us what has been done with the money and that's fine! That's fine!' I am exaggerating a bit, but...but in some cases, for more than 20 years, 30 years, it was like this. We visited a country looking for organizations we could help and they told us what they wanted to do and the director walked around with the checkbook in his pocket and would give them the check saying 'send us some information someday.' It was like this in some cases that we spent our money. Today it's no longer like this."

*"[Não é só por solidariedade que estamos trabalhando, temos também uma profissionalidade]. Então com olhos mais críticos em tudo o que está passando. É menos como antes que 'Ah! tudo bem! Já damos os fundos e você vai trabalhar e algum dia vamos nos encontrar para ver o que foi feito com o dinheiro e está bem! Está bem!'. É um pouco exagerado, mas é...mas em alguns casos, hace mais de 20 anos, de 30 anos, a coisa estava assim. Fazíamos visitas a um país procurando organizações que pudessemos ajudar e eles diziam o que queriam fazer e o diretor andava com o cheque em su bolsa e entregava o cheque e dizia 'algum dia você manda alguma informação.' Assim foi em alguns casos que nos gastamos os fundos. E agora já não é."*

"Faced with all this questioning, agencies have often had difficulties in explaining the impact of their own work, of the priorities which are more related to qualitative, social changes than to quantitative [...] This is where the questions the Agencies are asking to their partners are coming from: what can you tell us about your work, about its impact, about the results of your activities?" (Medias ONGs 1993:16)

*"Diante destas perguntas as agências freqüentemente têm tido dificuldades de explicar o impacto do próprio trabalho, das prioridades mais relacionadas com mudanças qualitativas, sociais, do que quantitativas [...] Daí surgem as perguntas que as Agências fazem aos seus parceiros: O que vocês podem nos dizer sobre o trabalho, o impacto, o resultado de suas atividades?" (Medias ONGs 1993:16).*

"We are in a new era of change. The 60s was the decade of development and of the 'Green Revolution', the 70s that of solidarity. The 80s was that of partnership, and now, in the 90s, what is most salient is professionalism, impact and results" (Reich 1995:1).

*"Estamos em nova época de mudanças. A década de 60 foi a do desenvolvimento e da 'revolução verde', a de 70 foi a da solidariedade. A década de 80 foi a da parceria, e agora, nos 90, o que predomina é o profissionalismo, o impacto, os resultados" (Reich 1995:1).*

"In general, the problem I see [with agencies] is that to live off financing is extremely unstable, extremely draining. It is an enormous waste of time and energy, you are constantly writing projects, always asking for money, always negotiating. Emotionally it is draining. I know because here I am the one who does it most of the time, emotionally it is extremely draining and it is a waste of time [...] The fact that you have to continuously be looking for funding, be

negotiating, be showing them, the agencies, that really you are worth their money. It is extremely unpleasant and draining."

*"No geral, o problema que eu vejo [com as agências] é que você viver de financiamento, é uma coisa extremamente instável, extremamente desgastante, e um desperdício de tempo e energia enormes, você está sempre escrevendo projetos, sempre pedindo dinheiro, sempre negociando. Isso é um desgaste emocional, eu sei, porque sou eu que faço isso, na maioria das vezes aqui, é um desgaste emocional muito grande, é uma perda de tempo [...] O fato de você ter, permanentemente, que buscar financiamento, negociar, você mostrar pra eles, pros financiadores, que realmente você vale a pena ser financiada, é uma coisa extremamente desagradável e desgastante."*

"The version that we heard from ...the people from X is that the people from Y had suggested that we do not participate in the project. And, according to the people of Y, that the people of X were the ones who suggested that we did not participate!"

*"A versão que nos chegou, conforme a...o pessoal do X, é que o pessoal de Y tinha proposto que a gente não ficasse no projeto. E, conforme o pessoal de Y, que o pessoal do X tinha proposto que a gente não ficasse no projeto!"*

"So people became less enthusiastic, to the point where there were a series of logistical problems at the Carlos Chagas Foundation. And then the rumour was around that the project had no money. Then there was not even anybody to coordinate the project."

*"Então as pessoas se desanimaram um pouco, a ponto que teve uma série de problemas logísticos com a Fundação Carlos Chagas. E aí, a notícia que corria, era que o projeto não tinha dinheiro, então, não tinha nem quem coordenasse mais o projeto!"*

"Oxfam believes that unless inequalities between men and women be considered, there will be no consolidation of sustainable development and of poverty alleviation."

*"A Oxfam acredita que a menos que as desigualdades entre homens e mulheres sejam enfocadas, não será possível consolidar um desenvolvimento sustentável e reduzir a pobreza" (Oxfam 1993:3).*

"The acknowledgement of women's right to self-determination is therefore, more than anything else, a logical characteristic of Novib's general policy. Of course, Novib also acknowledges the substantial contribution that women make to processes of development and the right to equal opportunities for all."

*"El reconocimiento del derecho de las mujeres a la autodeterminación es entonces antes que nada una especificación lógica de la política general de Novib. Evidentemente Novib reconoce también la contribución sustancial que las mujeres hacen a los procesos de desarrollo y el derecho a oportunidades iguales para todos" (Novib 1991:3).*

"Support the development of self-confidence by strengthening women's groups/organizations, by promoting dialogues and support networks." Point 4 reads: "Continue to help and strengthen relations between women's groups and organizations nationally and internationally in order to intensify mutual understanding and solidarity in collective actions."

*"Apoia[r] o desenvolvimento da auto-confiança; fortalecendo as organizações/grupos de mulheres, promovendo diálogos e redes de apoio." Point 4 reads: "continua[r] a ajudar e a fortalecer ligações entre grupos de trabalho e organizações de mulheres nacional e internacionalmente para intensificar entendimento e solidariedade mútuos nas ações."* (Oxfam 1993: 6).

"Several important programs of Africare directly support processes of democratization and development of the private sector, as well as, in general, train governments to improve human quality of life."

*"Vários importante programas da Africare apoiam directamente os processos de democratização e desenvolvimento do sector privado, bem como, de modo geral, capacitam os governos a melhorar a qualidade da vida humana."* (Africare 1994: 13) [relatório anual de 1994].

"In a great number of countries of the South, poverty and demographic increase influence each other negatively. Icco favors an active demographic policy. However, this policy must be part of a larger vision of the poverty issue and must be oriented towards greater dignity for men and women" (ICCO 1993:15).

*"En gran parte de los países del Sur pobreza y crecimiento demográfico se influyen negativamente. Icco está a favor de una política demográfica activa. Sin embargo esta política debe formar parte de un enfoque más amplio de la problemática de la pobreza y debe estar dirigida al fomento de la dignidad de hombres y mujeres"* (ICCO 1993: 15).

*"a pressão da cooperação internacional no sentido de dissuadir a postura 'do contra' é visível"* "the pressure on the part of the international cooperation to prevent any "oppositional" position is palpable" (Doimo 1994:20).

"Everytime in Brazil there is more emphasis put on political pressure... at the national level...advocacy. So we thought, that in the area of gender also it would be important for us to have a counterpart working from a gender perspective."

*"Cada vez no Brasil há mais atenção para a pressão política... assim, ao nível nacional .."advocacy." Então achávamos que também para o enfoque de gênero é importante que temos uma contraparte que está trabalhando desde essa perspectiva de gênero."*

"This is how I think. To do a good lobbying job at the national level you don't need...contacts with the neighborhoods, with neighborhood people. It can be an advantage but it is not possible for each organization to work both at the level of the neighborhood, at the level of the local municipal government and at the national and international level. For many organizations it is too much"

*"Acho assim, para fazer um bom trabalho de lobby ao nível nacional não precisa... contatos com os bairros, com as pessoas do bairro. Pode ser uma vantagem mas também não é possível para cada organização trabalhar o nível do bairro e o nível da prefeitura local e ao nível nacional e internacional. Para muitas organizações é demasiado [...]"*

"We never had any demands on the part of agencies to do things that we did not want to do. It never happened and, also do not accept proposals that request that we, for example, do things...like using a IUD on all women or tying the tubes of women or recommending women to have her tubes tied or...not counseling women regarding abortion. This never happened.

Once only there was an agency which forbid F&S...to work with abortion, not only not performing abortions but also not counseling; then we did not accept the financing, OK."

*"Nós nunca tivemos exigências de agências para fazer coisas que nós não queríamos fazer, nunca tivemos e, tampoco, aceitamos propostas que nos exigissem, por exemplo, fazer coisa... colocar DIU em todas as mulheres ou laquear mulheres ou encaminhar pra laqueadura ou... não orientar mulher sobre aborto. Nunca tivemos. Nós só tivemos uma vez que uma agência proibia o F&S... trabalhar com aborto, não só fazer aborto, mas orientar; e aí nós não ...não pagamos o financiamento, certo."*

"they never interfere in our broad working directives. We do what we want" (Rachel F&S)

"There are no problems. When there is a problem we cut the relation...for example if they impose their view. Since I have been here it happened with Pathfinder. They wanted to fund us but it was very specific, with a problematic proposal and we decided not to do what they wanted us to do. And it was a time when we needed money!" (Claudia SPT). Similarly, among volunteer organizations, I was told: "They don't influence us in any way" (MU) "I don't even see them" (Alessandra MU) "So far we have worked without problems" (Moema, The Casa).

*"Nunca interferem nas linhas de trabalho. Fazemos o que queremos"* (Rachel F&S) *"Não tem problema, quando tem problema a gente corta as relações... assim do tipo de quiser impor demanda. Desde o tempo que estou aqui aconteceu com a Pathfinder. Ela queria financiar a gente, mas era muito direitinho, dentro de uma proposta muito complicada e a gente resolveu não fazer o que eles queriam, e era uma época que precisava dinheiro!"* (Claudia SPT). Nas organizações voluntárias, falaram assim: *"Influência de jeito nenhum"* (MU) *"nem vejo eles"* Alessandra (MU). *"Até aqui trabalhamos sem imposição"* (Moema Casa).

"It starts with what they give priority to, so either you...fit in their priorities or they tell you no. Now once they have accepted to finance then the relation is rather open"

*"é a partir do que elas priorizam, então ou você... se encaixa nas prioridades ou então elas vão te responder não. Agora quando elas aceitam financiar aí não, geralmente a relação é bastante aberta, né?"*

"no, that's why we have so little money!" *"Não, por isso é que nós estamos com pouco dinheiro!"*

"X support given topics" or "they did not finance the part of this work that deals with women, only the work with teenagers" *"X apoia certas temáticas"* or *"eles não financiaram a parte do trabalho com mulheres, só com as adolescentes."*

"On one side, our needs, the quasi impossibility to work without resources from outside. On the other, the search for our autonomy, our respect, our pride, our dignity." *"de um lado, nossas necessidades, a quase impossibilidade de trabalhar sem esses recursos de fora. Do outro, a busca da nossa autonomia, do nosso respeito, da nossa altivez, da nossa dignidade."*

She politely but squarely declared "How wonderful if we could work without international cooperation!" *"Que bom se a gente pudesse trabalhar sem cooperação internacional!"*

"They, men and women, have the correct perspective on our problems, and we are the poor souls who don't know anything. This comes out very strongly and it is a colonizer's mentality!" *"eles e elas é que tem a visão correta dos nossos problemas, é que nós somos os coitados que não sabemos quase nada. Isso é muito forte e é pensameto de colonizador!"*

"This is no longer our objective. Now it is that! For example: "Now it's no longer the rural world but the cities! or certain statements such as "this should not be" or "What you are trying to do is too soon" or "this organization is stuck in the local" or again "this organization is going to bureaucratize, it is not going to strengthen the base."

*"Isso não é mais nosso objetivo. Agora é aquilo! Por exemplo: "Agora não é mais o campo, é a cidade! ou então certas colocações do tipo "isso não deve ser assim" ou "isso que vocês estão querendo realizar ainda não é tempo" ou "essa organização não sai da base" ou então "essa organização vai se burocratizar, não vai reforçar a base."*

"Popular movements do not elaborate as well as an NGO full of 'doctors'" *"Os movimentos populares não elaboram tão bem quanto uma ONG cheia de 'doutores'"*.

"NGO member: According to my personal experience no.. we do not do this.

N: (surprised) you don't do this?

NGO member: At the maximum we moderate our language a bit when it is a christian agency, do you understand? or... things like that."

*"Membro de ONG: Na minha experiência pessoal a gente não... a gente não faz isso.*

*Nathalie: (surprised) vocês não tem que fazer isso ?*

*Membro de ONG: No máximo, manera um pouco a linguagem, quando é cristã, tá entendendo? ou ... coisas desse tipo".*

"To expose yourself, to say what you think, means running the risk of no longer receiving funding" *"Expor-se, dizer o que pensa, é correr o risco de não receber mais fundos"*

"The [NGOs] who have made it so far know that the benevolence of European agencies linked to churches for mobilization and popular organizing is declining, while the interest of secular agencies in interventions measured in terms of efficiency and rationality, based on a cost/benefit calculations, is rising"

*"As [ONGs] que perduram sabem que declina a benevolência das agências confessionais européias para projetos de mobilização e organização popular e cresce o interesse de agências leigas por ações pautadas por critérios de eficácia e racionalidade, baseados no cálculo do custo/benefício."* (Doimo 1994:22).

APPENDIX B  
DESCRIPTION OF MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

**SPT - DESCRIPTION OF MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES**

- 1 Political networking; relations with Board of directors; relations with int'l organizations; organization of discussions of internal politics; a few courses; participates in write-up of educational material/newsletter; 'assessoria'; relations with ABONG
- 2 Member of the women's health pgm. Involved in tasks that require partnerships with other groups, i.e. IRRRAG; feminist health network; Participates in the production of educational material; Conducts debates, courses, training, workshops.
- 3 Assessoria' to CUT (trade-union); brings 'demandas' from trade-unions; 'assessoria' to Central dos Movimentos Populares; participates in Campaign for Citizenship; debates (especially on women and work issues); Helps with finances and internet account
- 4 Assessoria to health movement & to housing NGO; participates in newsletter, member of local health council, member of technical comission of public health system users in Brasilia; Links general health issues and women's health issues
- 5 Long-term assessoria with MSZL on women's health issues; some training; some participation in educational material; responds to punctuated demands for support.
- 6 Assessoria to Grupo de mulheres da Zona Leste; Debates and lectures on gender relations in schools, youth centers. Help other movements incorporate gender; member of local maternal mortality committee; help with workshops to MSZL
- 7 Currently coordinator of the 2 programs. Facilitating articulation of various projects/demands'. Respond to 'demand' for training on feminism, organization, sexuality, reproductive rights, incorporating race issues.
- 8 Edit texts in particular the newsletter, with effort to systematize SPT's vision and methodology; newspaper clipping; participates in elaboration of educational material
- 9 Elaboration of educational material; training; debates, courses, other demands for support.

### **F&S - DESCRIPTION OF MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES**

- 1 Responsible for institutional projects (reports). Relations with financing agencies; Political relations with Feminist Health Network; relations with foreign organizations; management; coordinator of one project.
- 2 Coordinates int'l research project on women's reprod health in Br; works on 2 projects (violence; AIDS) represents F&S at regional forum of the Rede; works on prep of int'l women's health conference; helps with pb cases in clinic; member of CECF
- 3 Two research projects one on women and AIDS and one on maternity and work. Also in charge of the financial coordination of the organization.
- 4 Education and training. Edition of feminist newsletter. works on one project on women and AIDS. Follows up on what needs to be done on everyday basis.
- 5 Restructuring the clinic's data base and consultation procedures. Works on two projects: one is a Latin American exchange pgr for feminist health specialists; the other about health and violence.
- 6 One of the members of F&S. Conducts gynecological care consultations; a pregnancy group for natural birth, a study on diaphragm; does translations.
- 7 Gynecological care, study on abortion, the birth control pill and the diaphragm, training of health professionals. Organization of monthly seminar.

### **CM - DESCRIPTION OF MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES**

- 1 President according to statutes, but equal relations and collective work. 'I have this role of seeing things coming.'
- 2 Treasurer because the person who did this no longer participates. Maintains the link with health issues. Organizes seminars on health.
- 3 "I am secretary according to the statutes [...] but we function more collectively [...] so I am an active element of this collective [...] who, on an every-day basis, contributes to the work of the Casa"
- 4 Member' of the Casa. She and another member represent Casa at Maternal Mortality committee. Conducts workshops. Discusses projects' elaboration. Questions the others on situation of the Casa today. Works on one project.



## MU - DESCRIPTION OF MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

- 1 "I already did a bit of everything. I don't even know how to answer" I've been cleaning lady, worked on the Newsletter, I am a member of the 'diretoria'. Used to work a lot with the 'nucleos'. No specific role, it depends on the political conjuncture
- 2 "I do anything that comes up. I want things rolling". Some accused her of being 'the boss'. She is now General Treasurer because she was asked to. Sees her potential: organize debates, work in the periferia, write for the newsletter"
- 3 Last year we had a big fight'. 'now I am pro-forma President'. 'When I first participated, I stayed one year listening' 'I never had the profile to be in an organization.' 'With time I started feeling part of the group, I started presenting my projects"
- 4 Formally has had various positions in the Board of Directors. In practice deals with paperwork. Few members are 'comprometidas'. "Since I am rather organized, I have been stuck with the paperwork. It's quite boring."
- 5 Chair of Health Dept. Part. of health events, seminars, conferences and transmit info to the group. Conducts AIDS workshops. Conducts leisure activities for MU when things are tense. Help prepare Meetings. Helps other depts. 'we do a little of every thing
- 6 Says she doesn't have any role because she is not a member of the Board of Directors. Participates in the meetings as 'ouvinte'. Does a few things like serve tea at seminar. Participated in Feminist Meeting in Caldas Novas.
- 7 Says she doesn't have a very well defined role and cannot afford to miss to work if something comes up.
- 8 Psychological follow-up for cases of violence against women MU follows. 2 cases now. Participated in classes for 'promotoras legais populares' and in a class for women in situation of violence
- 9 "MU has a more democratic perfume than it really is. I participated more at times, less at others. I do not know what is my exact role. it was important not to have remunerated work but we end up not being able to part. of all that we would like."
- 10 In charge of cultural dept. "We thought of cultural events as a means of communication through art, lectures, dance, choir, parties. But it did not work." Works on the newsletter as well.

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Nathalie Lebon is a native of rural northeastern France. In 1983, she was awarded an honors scholarship by the German National Exchange Services (DAAD) to study for one semester at the University of Cologne, Germany. In 1987, she earned a master's degree in applied foreign languages from the University of Nancy II, France. After a one-year exchange program in the United States she graduated with a master's degree in political science, international affairs concentration, from Indiana University of Pennsylvania in 1988. As part of her degree requirements she participated in the 26th United Nations Graduate Study Program in Geneva in July 1988. She returned to academia in 1991 to enroll in the Ph.D. program in anthropology at the University of Florida. Her fieldwork in Brazil was financed by The North-South Center at the University of Miami, the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, The National Science Foundation and the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Florida. She is the author of two articles: "The Professionalization of Women's Health Groups in São Paulo: The Troublesome Road towards Organizational Diversity" in *Organization* (1996) for which she was awarded the Irene Thompson fellowship by the Center for Women's Studies and Gender Research at the University of Florida in September 1997, and "The Brazilian Feminist Movement in the Post-Constitutional Era: Assessing the Impact of the Rise of Feminist Non-Governmental Organizations" in *The Florida Journal of Anthropology* (1993).

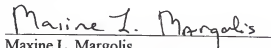
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Helen I. Safa, Chair  
Professor Emerita of Anthropology

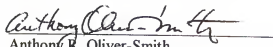
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